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DOC WILLIAMS





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"THE HEALING SPRING"

"Lots o' times I wonder why this healin' oil should be sent up here, way off in this little hide 'n' seek place." (P-103)

DOC WILLIAMS

A TALE OF THE MIDDLE WEST

BY

CHARLES H. LERRIGO

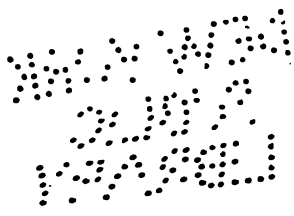


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To

The Doctor's Wife

"She riseth also while it is yet night"

[redacted]

FOREWORD

"Arter all, they ain't nothin' in medical science 'at is so plumb diff'runt f'm good plain common sense, ye understan' me."



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I

TWO DOCTORS

"AW, g'wan. Don't ye hit me again!" The little figure on the bed dodged uneasily in his restless sleep, and the well arm was shifted in a pathetic, involuntary effort to shield the broken limb which lay so helpless in its rude splints.

"Must have been with a tough gang," commented old Doc Williams to his sister, Aunt Mercy, as they stood looking down at the helpless little figure.

"More'n likely tramps, sence you found him down there by the track," responded Aunt Mercy. "Think he'll come to hisself putty soon?"

"That's what I ain't noways sure about," Doc admitted. "He was out'n his head when I run acros't him, an' even fixin' his arm up didn't bring him to. That's one of the things that chap I bought this business off'n didn't learn me. I remember of him tellin' me what to do fur them out'n their heads with licker, and for them as was that way from fallin' fits. But 'pears like he didn't have nothin' for them as was that way from bein' hurt."

"Mebbe it'd do him good to treat him same as you would fallin' fits," suggested Aunt Mercy, hopefully.

"Mebbe it would," Doc assented. "He cert'ny had a fall an' a good deal like a fit. To treat them I waits till they quit strugglin', then makes a line with my magnetic needle from the midriff up to the neck an' down on each side to the end of the middle finger. The fit follers the needle along to the end of the finger an' off into nothin'. We'll try it, anyway."

But by the time Doc, after a long hunt, found his

" magnetic needle " in the pocket of last winter's overcoat, where it had been left after his last case of " fallin' fits," the little sufferer was in his first, quiet sleep, and so Aunt Mercy told him.

" Let him sleep," sagely advised Doc. " We know the Scripture says, ' If he sleepeth he doeth well ' "; and his kindly old face wore a look of cheerful satisfaction.

The sleep of exhaustion lasted all through the night, but Doc and Aunt Mercy watched turn about every moment until, in the bright morning light, the little fellow opened his eyes and disclosed a light of comprehension. Light blue eyes they were, the kind that so often go with red hair, and, of course, freckles. The boy lay there, an undersized, skinny little chap of twelve, evidently quite himself—perhaps a little mystified as to his whereabouts, but not with the bewilderment that would have possessed a boy less used to waking in strange places.

" Gimme my cloes 'n' I'll be movin' on," was his first remark—at the same time an apology and a challenge.

" What's the hurry, bub? Stay an' get rested," invited Doc.

" This ain't no poor farm? " defiantly asked the boy.

" No, nor a horspital, nor a reform school, nor any kind of a institootion," Doc assured the boy, shrewdly guessing his fears. " It's just the home of Doc Williams an' Aunt Mercy, an' we're goin' to keep you till that arm gits well."

" Guess it must have doubled under me when Pokey Pete drapped me off'n that freight last night. Broke, is it? "

" Yes, both bones bruk 'tween elbow an' wrist, but I got it pulled straight, with a shingle on each side an' a whole lot of cotton battin' to pad, an' it looks putty good. I've had a lot o' broken arms fust an' last,

and they ain't nary a feller but what's got some use of 'em agen by time I was through with him," mildly boasted Doc.

The boy had listened in silence. Now he spoke up again, a sharp look of suspicion on his wizened features: "Say, I ain't got no money. Don't you make no mistake about it, now."

Doc looked across the bed at Aunt Mercy with a grin which developed into a hearty laugh.

"Hear to the child, Mercy. We don't want his money, do we? Go to sleep an' furgit about it, sonny."

The laugh, the look, and the kindly tone evidently carried conviction to the heart of the little wayfarer, for he smiled back a pathetic little grin, and the sharp features quickly smoothed out again into a quiet sleep.

From that hour he was ready to be the slave of the old man. There were other injuries besides the arm, which were serious and called for painful dressings. The boy submitted to the rude ministrations of the doctor without a murmur or the quiver of a muscle, in stoical fortitude. At the end of a week he was so far recovered that he was able to dress and get downstairs. After breakfast he shifted around uneasily for a while, looked hard at Aunt Mercy, and finally blurted out:

"Well, gimme my hat an' I'll be goin' along."

"You won't go away from this place while Doc Williams is away f'm home, if I can hold ye," said Aunt Mercy. "What d'ye suppose Doc'd say to me?"

"I surely don't *want* to go," the boy disclaimed. "I don't expect to get treated this good no place else. But you folks don't owe me nothing, an' I thought I'd better offer to go 'fore you was 'bliged to ask me."

"Doc's got kind of attached to ye, sonny, an' you'd sure hurt his feelin's if you went now. Better wait a while."

So the boy stayed on, enjoying the wholesome coun-

try food and fresh air, and very slowly getting back to strength, slowly chiefly because he suffered much with the fractured arm. He tried to conceal this from Doc, for he felt instinctively that it would be in the nature of a reflection upon the old man's treatment.

One day he wandered some little distance away from the house, where the road bridged over a rapid little creek. To the side of the bridge was a ford which was much used in hot weather, as it gave the drivers a chance to let their horses cool off a little. As he stood looking idly over the bridge, the water looked so cool and refreshing that he yielded to the impulse to run down there and plunge the hot, throbbing arm into its rippling depths. Here he was, his head bent down over the water, when a handsome, chestnut horse stepped into the ford, and, looking up, the boy saw behind him a light buggy in which sat a gentleman looking straight at him with kindly interest. His first impulse was to conceal the arm with its bandages, for he felt a little guilty about what he was doing. It was beyond the directions of the old doctor, and he felt, therefore, that it was in some measure a criticism of his treatment. But the quick eye of the stranger had already comprehended.

"Arm hurt you, my boy?" he asked, with kindly sympathy.

"Jest a little," the boy grudgingly admitted.

"What seems to be the matter with it?" was the next question.

"Broke it," was the laconic answer. And then, with a touch of boyish pride: "Doc says both bones is bruk clear through. He fixed it up, though, an' it's goin' to be all right."

"You mean Doctor Williams fixed it up for you. How long since you broke it?"

The boy had intended to say little or nothing, but there was no evading these direct questions, so he

replied: "About two weeks, now"; and then, feeling that some explanation was needed to account for the pain: "It was a mighty bad break. An' it don't hurt much now, only feels hot like an' swelly."

He had no intention of allowing even an implied reflection on his doctor's repair.

"I'm glad of that," responded the stranger. "I was afraid it was hurting you pretty badly, from the look on your face when I first came up. But what about those wet bandages? I have some dry ones in the buggy I'll be glad to put on for you."

The boy looked at the stranger with some relief. He had been worrying about those wet bandages, for he did not want to have to tell the old doctor about the soaking.

"Sure ye can fix it all right an' not let nuthin' slip ner nuthin'?"

A quiet smile passed over the stranger's face.

"I think I can manage if you'll trust me with it," he assured the boy. "I've done quite a little of this kind of thing. I'm not just the kind of doctor that Doctor Williams approves of, nor he my kind for that matter. If he were, I suppose I wouldn't touch this. But I've worked things over after him more than once, and I have heard that he has returned me the compliment."

He had climbed out of his buggy and was skilfully removing the dressings as he talked. The boy looked on in wonder and in fear, not knowing what to expect of pain or relief. When the last fold of dressing was removed, and the bruised and swollen arm lay bare, a look of grave sympathy appeared on the doctor's face.

"That was a bad break, my lad," said he. "I'm going to tell you that you haven't got the very best result. I'm not criticising Doctor Williams. I know he did the best he could at the time, and perhaps it was

as good as that of any one else. But you tell him that Doctor Goodman says that, left this way, you will have a stiff wrist. Then he's had his bandages too tight, which accounts for most of the pain. Now, you tell him I will be glad to give you ether and straighten this out for you, and tell him that at the very least it ought to be massaged and bandaged fresh every day from now on. Now let me fix it for you."

Child though he was, the boy could not fail to see how superior was the skilfully applied dressing, but its very superiority awoke within his loyal little heart a savage jealousy for the old man's reputation.

"It ain't just like Doc fixed it, but I guess it'll do," he said, gravely. "I don't want nobody to fix my arm but Doc."

"Don't be a foolish lad," admonished the doctor. "A stiff wrist will mean a great deal to you a few years from now. Williams is good-hearted if he is simple, and if you ask him he will bring you over to get the arm fixed. Don't forget to tell him. And the very least you do have him rub it every day, and bandage it not too tight."

The doctor drove off, leaving the defiant little chap uncertain what to tell the old man. He could feel, already, the ease of the new dressing, but would rather attribute it to the soaking he had given it. He dawdled along toward the house, and was relieved to find that the old doctor was out calling. He hid the new bandage from Aunt Mercy by pinning his coat tightly around him. His physical relief, from the adjustment of the dressings, was quite overwhelmed by the mental distress caused by the anticipation of the old doctor's displeasure when he should discover his disloyal act. As the miserable moments dragged by he brought himself to the decision to tell the old man himself as soon as he reached home, and bear the consequences.

But all that he proposed to tell him was his guilt in allowing a stranger to change the dressings. The strange doctor's admonitions as to the care of his arm had already passed from his mind.

It was growing dark when the old doctor's grey mare came jogging into sight. His good-natured old face was smiling as usual.

"Well, son, here you be as chipper as can be," he called as he carefully stepped out of his tipsy old buggy.

"What d'ye think, Aunt Mercy; I got the greatest idee y'ever heern tell of this arternoon, an' from nobody in the world but Doc Goodman, ye understan' me. I met up with Doc couple hours ago an' passed the time o' day right kindly as we allus does. An' he says to me, says he, 'See here, Doctor Williams,' says he, 'about this 'dopted son of yours.' Well, sir, he kinder tuk me off'n me feet fer a minute, an' I says right off, 'What 'dopted son?' I says. 'Oh, the boy with the broken arm,' says he, an' then it come to me thet he means the little shaver here, an' you ought to heern me laugh. 'What made ye think he wuz my 'dopted son, Doc?' I asks. An' he says, 'Well, he jes' give me that genrul impression,' he says. 'I undertook to look at his arm,' he says, 'an' when I suggested 'at what you done might possibly hev been done just a leetle shade better, he wuz nigh on to eatin' me up,' he says.

"Well, sir, you know, Mercy, I ben thinkin' on that ever since, an' it's just the best idee I ever heern of, ye understan' me. Here's a way fer an ole batchelder like me ter git a son. Why, we'll eddicate the boy, Aunt Mercy, send him to school an' college, ye understan' me. Why, I says right away to Doc, I says: 'That's a mighty good idee, Doc, an' if the boy's willin' I'll do it, an' I'll send him to college where he'll get the kind of eddication you got, Doc, an' then

with your eddication an' my healin' oil there'll be a combination what I've hoped for years might happen, one 'at'll cure anythin'. Then, Doc, you an' me can just dry up an' be blown away, ye understan' me.' Well, Doc, he jest laughed. Then he said, 'Well, if you want that left wrist of his'n to be any good you better bring him over to-morrer an' I'll give him ether an' pull that ulna away from the radius. You done the best you could probably, but it ain't the best 'at can be did.'"

The boy, who had stood listening in silence, here broke in, violently: "My arm's all right an' he hadn't no right to meddle with it. I didn't ask him to. He jest done it cause the rags it was wrapped in was all wet, but he ain't goin' to do no more. I want you to fix it, an' nobody else ain't goin' to tech it."

"All right, sonny! All right! I thought it was real kind in Doc, but he aren't goin' to tech it less'n you want him. I'll tell you what let's do, though. Doc said to rub it. That's a mighty good idee. Let's rub it with our healin' oil every day. Careless in me not to think o' that."

"Well, he sha'n't tech it. You're a better doctor'n he is any day," insisted the boy.

"Well, son, Doc has some mighty good p'ints," magnanimously contended the old man. "He cert'ny knows a heap. An' if he only had the good jedgment to use my healin' oil he could do anythin'—anythin'! I went to him wunst after he'd done almost a miracle for a man all by hisself, an' I offered him the use of the oil from my Natural Healin' Spring. I says: 'Doc, there ain't only one thing wrong with you,' I says. 'You're like the Book says in Jeremiah 30: "Thou hast no healing medicines." Now,' I says, 'if a pore, uneddicated man like me kin git the results I do with my healin' oil, what couldn't a man of your eddication do with it?' I says. But he turned

me down. Kindly, ye understan' me, kindly, but jest as positive. He's very sot in his opinions, is Doc.

"But now," he burst out, with enthusiasm; "now, we got the thing goin' just about right, ye understan' me. You shall have an eddication like Doc's, sonny; so you'll know all about every littlest part of the body. 'Twon't make no difference in what you use. You'll use the healin' oil jest as I do. But it stands to reason it makes a difference jest how you use it an' how much. Now, if you're treatin' fer a misery way down in your knee it's goin' to take more of it to hit the spot than if it's only the elbow what's ailin'. But how's a man 'at never learned it to know jest how much more, ye understan' me? Ef you know like Doc does, jest where all the big vessels lies an' how big they be, ye could figure it jes' right. But if ye're like me, ye have to do a heap o' guessin' an' it spiles yer results, lots o' times. But you stay with us an' be eddicated, son, an' you shall learn it all an' be the biggest doctor in the country."

II

THE NEWSPAPER MAN

THE day Latham Corners unwittingly added the little outcast to its population, it gathered, with joyous acclaim, a really desirable addition in the person of a young newspaper man. It also gathered his wife, a sweet, cultured, young college-graduate, not at all the type of woman to be dismissed with the word "also."

The newspaper man was quite willing that the joyous acclaim should be one-sided. He felt no joy in coming to Latham Corners. He was an ambitious, self-centred, selfish young man who had done reportorial work of many kinds on the *Tribune,* and was doing better all the time.

But the eminent specialist whom he consulted had said two long words in diagnosis: "Incipient tuberculosis!" and his prescription had been very pointed:

"Leave the city—change your abominable hours. Nature never intended you to work until two or three in the morning. Find a place in the country where you can do just enough work to make a living and keep you interested—where you can sleep ten hours of undisturbed rest every night—where you can eat plenty of nourishing food and have plenty of time to eat it—where you can breathe fresh air day and night—where you can get sunshine to tan your skin and the chance to be out in it, and where you can be at peace."

It was a hard blow to a man whose constant dreams were of riches and power; but there was no alternative. So he had discovered Latham Corners, and in the

weeks which had elapsed had been trying to resurrect the long defunct *Latham Weekly Herald.* The job had been far from peaceful. The newspaper man had served his time strictly in a reportorial capacity. Up to the time of receiving his sentence he had never so much as learned the case. He did not know how to set up a stick of type; if he got it set up, he would surely pi it shifting it to the galley; by no means could he make it up, and if made up would not be able to lock up his form.

Being a most energetic and resourceful young man he had gone diligently to work to overcome these deficiencies, and, with the aid of an old printer, had at last reached the place where the initial number of the resurrected *Herald* was about to proclaim itself. His patent insides were at hand, his forms were ready, and he was about to tackle the job of his life with the rehabilitated hand-press, when in walked Latham Corners' most zealous official, the Poor Commissioner.

"What's this old pumpkin-head want?" he asked, under his breath, as he saw him coming to interrupt.

He was soon enlightened, though in a roundabout way.

The official gave customary greeting and announced: "This cert'ny is just the place."

"Place for what?" impatiently asked the newspaper man.

"Place for that boy Doc Williams is talkin' of adoptin'. It's nonsense for Doc. He's sixty past a'ready. What's he and Aunt Mercy want saddlin' themselves with a boy their time o' life? It's plumb nonsense, but they's just fools enough if nobody hindered."

"I hope you aren't labouring under the idea that I shall try to hinder them?" enquired the newspaper man with frigid politeness.

"In a way you will," the official assured him calmly.

"That is, you'll help. But I'll have 'em understand that I'm Poor Commissioner, an' it's my business to look after loose characters, an' I won't stand no foolishness."

"What'll you do about it?"

"Do? Have him come here and learn a trade. That's the thing for a boy; learn a trade."

"Not if I know it, you won't," asserted the newspaper man, with some heat. "I may be here for my health, but that's no sign that I'm going to bear the burdens of this whole community. You keep your boy away from here. I've no disposition to turn my place into an orphan asylum."

"But you don't take me right," said the Poor Commissioner. "You need him worse'n he needs you. He's twelve years old. Just right for you to use."

"That may make a difference," allowed the editor, still hot and sweaty from his tussle with the press. "If he's big enough to do anything with a handpress, we'll go right up and see about it."

"Well, I ain't seen him clos't," admitted the Commissioner, "but a twelve-year-old ought to be getting to be quite a husky boy. You'd better take him."

"Not to adopt," declared the editor with frank selfishness. "But if he's a big, husky boy I might be willing to take him as apprentice. I'll go up with you and see about him."

Old Doc Williams had already sounded the boy as to his past, with but meagre results.

"Ye see, son, all I know about ye is 'at your name's Davy Jones, an' ye don't seem noways sure about even that, ye understan' me. Now, sence I'm goin' to adopt ye, I must know all ye can tell about yoreself."

"They ain't s' much to tell," replied the boy. "I lived with old Miss Jones till she died, an' I was called Jones, but she wasn't me mother an' she wasn't me gran'ma, an' I don't even know if she was anythin' at

all. Me father paid her for me grub, I know, but he never come nigh the place, an' I ain't seen him since I was too little to remember. About a year ago she told me he was a very sick man, but jest the same he couldn't come home, she said. Then she passed out an' nobody seemed to belong to me an' some talked o' this institootion an' some o' that, and none of 'em sounded good to me. So I just dropped out an' hit the road along about last spring, an' I ben with the hoboes ever since till now."

This was the sum of his information, and so matters stood on the morning the newspaper man decided that he could use a boy on his hand-press.

It was a warm, still August morning. The heat lay heavy over the fields and all who could lay dormant under its spell. Little Dave was lying half asleep in the shade of the house when his quiet was disturbed by seeing the two men enter. The Poor Commissioner's earnest attempts to vindicate his office had in some way reached the ears of the boy, and with that intuition that so marvellously comes in times of alarm, the lad guessed at once their errand. He crept close to the window to listen.

The old doctor received the men with his usual good nature.

"What's botherin' ye 'bout my little boy as I found, Mister Commissioner?" he asked, coming straight to the point.

"Doc, you know that I'm Poor Commissioner, don't you?"

"Shorely I do, an' ye ain't sech a poor Poor Commissioner, nuther," chuckled the doctor.

"Well, it's for the Poor Commissioner to look after them what's like to be a charge on the county; tramps, vagrants, an' such. You'll admit that?"

"Shorely, shorely! An' what's that to do with my little boy?"

"What it's to do with him is I've found a place to bind him out."

"This gentleman goin' to take him?" asked Doc, indicating the newspaper man.

He spoke up for the first time.

"I thought I could use him around my printing office and teach him the trade."

"That's right kind of ye, stranger. I cert'ny want to thank ye fer yore good feelin's, ye understand me. An' how about eddicatin' him?"

"He won't need much education for what I want him to do. The work that demands education I'll do myself. His work will be running the press, cleaning shop, inking rollers, and things of that kind. A big, husky boy of twelve will be expensive enough to keep, and I'll have to get as much out of him as I can."

The light of gentle amusement faded from the old man's face.

"Don't know s' much about his bein' a big, husky chap," he remarked. "'Pears to me he's kinder pindlin' fer twelve."

"We'd rather expect you to say that," said the clever Poor Commissioner, shrewdly, speaking as one not so easily deceived. "But I guess we'll see him for ourselves."

"And," went on the old man, ignoring the interruption, "I mus' tell you we ain't had real good luck with the broken arm. I've done my best, an' I hate to say it, but that ain't by no means a good arm yet. It'll need a lot of doctorin' fer a long time to come if it's to be right useful, ye understan' me."

The newspaper man's face took on a look of apprehension at mention of the broken arm, which deepened at the suggestion of "doctorin'."

"You didn't tell me anything about a broken arm," he said, accusingly, to the Poor Commissioner. "A

bad break might spoil all his usefulness. How bad is it?"

David, from his post of observation, drew his first hope from these words. The newspaper man's tone and looks had not attracted him. He wanted to stay with the doctor. And this man would not take him if his arm were bad? He might yet have a chance to stay! He knew what to do. Without a moment's hesitation to cool his hasty resolve he stepped into the low fork of a plum tree growing by the window, grasped, with the injured hand, a stout branch which hung above his head in bare reach, and swung off, full weight. An instant later he dropped to the ground with a moan, while a sickening pain shook his whole body and a cold sweat immersed him.

A few minutes later, when the doctor called, he was just able to steady himself, but it was a most severely pinched and sick little image that presented himself as the husky twelve-year-old of the Poor Commissioner's imagination.

"Why, son, what's the matter? Ye look right sick!" exclaimed the old doctor.

Never before had the boy uttered a word of complaint of the injured limb, but now he cried: "It's me arm. It hurts awful. I'm feared it ain't never goin' to git well."

It was enough for the editor.

"Oh, I couldn't take a boy like that," he said, shaking his head.

The doctor looked up a moment from the sick boy in scorn.

"I might say, stranger, 'at I never had no idee of lettin' ye take him. This yere little chap's goin' to be took care of right an' eddicated right. An' you take notice, Mister Poor Commissioner, that yore duty in this yere case is all did. I don't want ye to stay now, 'cause the boy's hurt hisself again an' I mus' fix him,

but I would suggest if yo're bound to hunt trouble ye shorely will find it yore advantage not to hunt round yere. They is sech a thing as bein' too successful, ye understan' me."

For once a boy's folly really worked to advantage. Not only did it eliminate the Poor Commissioner, but after the secondary swelling had subsided the old doctor was overjoyed to find that the sudden wrench had really pulled the fragments into better position, so that, after all, the arm promised good results.

"He shorely tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, Davy, boy," commented the old doctor. "I knowed that arm'd come straight someways or other. Give Him the glory."

But the boy, consistently loyal, gave the glory to his doctor.

III

THE UNSOLICITED ADVERTISEMENT

THE newspaper man, though endowed by nature with a sensitive epidermis, had become so calloused by years of a city reporter's life that he felt no special humiliation from his encounter with the old doctor. On the contrary, he turned it to profit by selling to his old paper, the *Tribune,* a story of the old man's eccentricities, written possibly with a little sting and yet quite fair from his viewpoint.

So it happened, as the *Tribune* was much in circulation at Latham Corners, that the little town had the joy of seeing itself held up to the public gaze. The excitement reached even the school-children, and as it happened to be the opening day, David made his début in the midst of it.

The story occupied a prominent place in the paper, under the heading:

"A PICTURESQUE OLD QUACK."

A curious old fellow lives at Latham Corners, styling himself "Doc Williams." He is not of the class who object to being addressed as "Doc," for he so announces himself. His right to the title he bought twelve years ago from "Doc Lewis," buying at one bargain the title, a six-room house, an old grey mare which he still drives, and "the healing spring," with a few little extras, such as the Latham Corners madstone, thrown in for good measure. Doc's special interest is in "the healing spring," which he considers to be of divine origin. He pays more attention to it

than his predecessor ever did, and is reported to have much better success with it. It is a little oily flow which bubbles from the ground at the foot of the slope just back of Doc's house. He has built a little rock house over it to prevent its desecration by venturesome boys, and this is opened only once each of the six working days of the week, when Doc goes through the ceremony of going in after his daily supply of oil. Before doing this he solemnly burns whatever residue there is from yesterday, for Doc believes the oil is sent in just sufficient amounts for the day's supply and loses its virtue if kept over. On Saturday he fully expects to find a double supply, and never yet has he been disappointed. So this modern fount of medicinal manna has evidently learned that we no longer observe the Jewish Sabbath but have changed to the American Sunday. Doc's method of using the oil he did not buy from Doc Lewis, who appears to have lacked the qualities of this polished artist and bunglingly used the precious oil for external rubbing. No such awkward way with Doc Williams. He cleverly makes application of his healing oil by dropping it into the eye. "For why?" says he, at your polite interrogation, "Scripture clearly p'ints it out. The eye is the light of the body. 'If, therefore, thine eye be single the whole body is full of light.' An' if ye doubt whether it gits anywhere jest cough a little about fifteen minutes arter a few drops goes into your eye an' see if it ain't penetrated as deep as anything 'at was ever give by the mouth. An' if ye get up a sweat ye'll find it in that, ye understan' me. An' if yore trouble's in yore toes an' ye had some way to look inside 'em ye'd find it there, believe me." We assured the old gentleman that we did, being positive that he himself, at any rate, was fully convinced. The old doctor also believes very firmly in his madstone—the only one in that part of the country—

and in a certain "magnetic needle," which is also a relic of Doc Lewis. He differs from Lewis not only in being more artistic in his methods and more genuine in his actions, but also in a certain consistent policy of gratuitous service. He insists that healing is from the Almighty and that He will tell the beneficiary what fee to pay. This, while undoubtedly a matter of simple faith, might well be of the deepest subtlety, for who can think of trifling sums being dictated by Almighty God? It is said that a certain Senator who came through five states to be cured, paid the old man five hundred dollars which was the fee the surgeon had named for operative treatment, and remarked that even then he had saved the hospital fees. Many people come long distances for the old doctor's services. The little hotel at Latham Corners draws its chief patronage from his patients. All of which goes to show that the world is still credulous, and let a man show himself sincere he will get followers, be he right or be he wrong.

Adorned by photographs of the old house, the grey mare and buggy and the sacred spring-house, this article appeared, and was read far and wide. The school-children, who would otherwise have paid little attention, were attracted by these pictures of familiar places actually appearing in a big city paper. David came in the midst of their excitement.

"Here he comes. Here comes the quack's boy," a big, mischievous fellow cried. Several others took up the taunt, "Quack's boy! Quack's boy!"

David had not spent his young life running wild in city streets to be intimidated by a set of country children. He did not understand the allusion, but the taunting tones were clear enough for any one. His left arm was still carried in a sling, but, without a moment's hesitation, he flung himself at the big leader,

and by sheer force of attack bore him to the ground. Luckily the big boy was good-natured as well as mischievous, or the broken arm might have suffered yet again.

"Let me up, you little tiger," he cried. "I'm afraid you'll knock your arm against me and hurt it, you little bunch of ginger, you."

Davy got slowly to his feet, wiping the dirt from his face with his well hand.

"What's that ye're calling me?" he enquired, grimly.

"Nothing that'll hurt you much, I guess. We called you 'Quack's boy.' Here it is in the *Tribune* where your daddy is a picturesque old quack, and here's a picture of your house and your spring-house."

"Johnny's pa is Judge Langston, and he knows," volunteered a little girl, in a shrill voice. "He give Johnny the paper, and it's surely so."

"Sure as houses," confirmed Johnny Langston. "Here's the *Tribune*. It's on this page, here. See, there's the picture of your house, and there's the spring-house, and there's old Grey hitched to the buggy, and there's old Doc himself. Pop says it must have been writ by that newspaper man who came here a few weeks ago. It tells all about Doc and the healing oil, and how Doc puts it in folks' eyes, and how it comes bubbling up in the spring six days in the week and don't any of it come on Sunday, and all about Doc's madstone, too. And it tells how the Senator paid Doc five hundred dollars for curing him when the surgeon said he had to be operated on or die, and it says Doc is a picturesque old quack. There, I'll read it to you. If it's in a big paper like the *Tribune*, it's bound to be so. Everybody knows it."

David listened to the story very intently.

"It don't seem to say nothin' very bad about him," he admitted, reluctantly. "It says he's genuine and

sincere and cures lots of people. I don't know what it means by quack."

"Maybe it's something that is all right to be," obligingly offered a little girl.

"No, it isn't. A quack is a bad kind of doctor, I'm pretty sure," insisted Doctor Goodman's daughter Elsie. "But I never heard papa say anything about Doc Williams being a quack, and I don't believe he is."

"If he is, I am too, that's all they is to it. Anybody 'at calls him a quack's got to call me a little quack."

This desperate ultimatum was issued just as the school bell rang. The children filed into school, and Davy's name was entered for the first time as "David Williams," but in the minds of the children he was already registered as "the little quack."

Two whole days David carried the obnoxious newspaper clipping in his pocket. He felt that it should be shown to the old doctor, yet dreaded doing so. When at last, on the evening of the second day, he spread the sheet before the old man's eyes, he was astonished at its calm reception.

"Yes, I've seed it afore, Davy. Several kind folks showed it ter me, in fac'. It don't bother me none, boy. Ye see it's this-a-way, sonny; when ye're doin' the thing 'at's right—the thing 'at's right, ye understan' me—it don't matter nothin' what other people think or say about ye. An' it don't make no difference whether a big paper says it or some old woman at the Corners. It comes out jest the same in the long run, an' what folks thinks of ye or what folks says of ye, while it ain't so to speak of no account, still it ain't nuf 'count to switch ye when ye're doin' what ye know's right. Look yere, boy," the old man pulled him to the door, where the twilight was being lit up by the fast-appearing stars. "There's the evenin' star over there. It's there every night, makes no difference

what folks think ner what they say ner do. It's there 'cause God wants it there. I humbly aims to be like that."

The old man settled down in his chair, while the boy, thrilled with the peculiar solemnity of the mystic, turned to his studies with a new reverence for his benefactor.

As a matter of fact, the people from whom the old doctor drew his local practice were greatly impressed that their doctor should be so important as to get his picture in a great city paper, and though the children continued to call David "little quack," it was rather conceded to be a title of honour.

IV

THE DUMMY AND THE DAINTY MAIDEN

THE newspaper man's story omitted one rather interesting feature—the little house by the side of the road. This was the old doctor's "little chamber on the wall," which was sacredly held for the passing traveller.

Quite commonly the travellers, finding the quarters rather comfortable, were not inclined to "pass" very readily. But long ago one of their ilk had installed himself as a permanent habitant, and he it was who insisted upon all others using it only as a temporary shelter and remaining birds of passage. Not a powerful man, not ferocious, not masterful, he yet possessed a physical or rather pathological peculiarity which was sufficient to ensure him such privacy as he desired. For the man could make no speech but inarticulate sounds, and the simple transients who sought shelter from the wayside heat or chill were invariably too superstitious to cross him.

David saw nothing of this man until he suddenly ran across him, weeks after he came. He ran to Aunt Mercy to tell her of the strange trespasser.

"Never min', Davy," said the old lady. "It's the man 'at Doc lets live in the little house. It's one of his idees—got it readin' 'bout the woman' at built the place fer the old prophet in the Bible an' had a son give to her. Doc said jes' the other day he hadn't expected no son an' got one anyway. This yere chap ain't no prophet. He's a dummy an' more loony 'n' anythin' else. But Doc won't never send nobuddy

away, so I reckon he'll stay furever. Don't pay no heed to him. He won't hurt ye none."

Aunt Mercy's prediction of the length of stay seemed likely to be fulfilled, for the man stayed on with monotonous persistence. David, far from feeling any fear, grew into a sort of tolerant companionship, and the dummy frequently showed his liking for the boy. It was he who helped David into the good graces of Elsie Goodman.

Elsie was a clever, bright girl, amiable and kind, but it was scarcely to be expected that she would be especially friendly with a little castaway like David. One of her chief possessions was a dog—a Russian wolf-hound, high-bred, intelligent, extremely devoted to his young mistress, but not, like his mistress, amiable, nor to the uninitiated, handsome. He had been sent from the city by a friend of Doctor Goodman, to be a companion and protector to the adventurous girl in her long walks.

One day, the dummy, using his peculiar method of communication, which David already understood better than the older people, invited him to go with him to the village. There, fastened with a long chain to a fence paling, they saw Elsie's dog. In some way he had managed to wind himself up so that he was held tightly against the fence. Then some enemy, probably a boy, by approaching from the other side of the fence, had managed to add to his misfortune the indignity of dragging his tail between the palings and tying to it an old tin kettle.

The dog was frothing at the mouth in a great frenzy, a wild-looking object indeed. David shared somewhat in the general fear of the animal, but as Dummy pointed out, they could not come to much harm from the safe side of the fence, so, with soothing words and gentle actions, they managed to release the animal.

And in the midst of the work Elsie arrived on the scene.

The intelligent dog understood to whom his thanks were due, and showered attentions impartially on David and Dummy alike. But the young lady, with the partiality of her sex, gave all her thanks to the boy, who, after all, had played only second fiddle; thereby demonstrating that the important thing is not the position of the fiddler but of the audience.

Poor Dummy got nothing out of it but a dog's friendship. The dog, Wolf, acquired nothing but an increased dislike for the general public, and a growing bad name. But David was admitted into full fellowship with the most attractive girl of the neighbourhood.

Elsie did not really belong at Latham Corners, for she lived at Hampton Bluff, some three miles distant. Doctor Goodman had built a fine home there several years before, choosing the high site in the hope of benefiting his wife's health; a vain hope, for she stayed to enjoy it but a few brief months.

Elsie came to school at Latham Corners because it was the best in the country, and nothing was too good for the doctor's daughter. Jake, the doctor's man, and the fine chestnut horse helped bridge the distance, though there were times when these trusty servants failed her. Then David was always willing to walk with her and cheer her on her way, though he had no one to cheer him on his return, and at first, having nothing like the muscle and strength of the healthy girl, really found the trips wearing, and was glad enough that he had no pacemaker for the homeward journey.

But David was very glad of a companion. Life had been rather slow with no one but the old people to see. Now the monotony was effectually broken. Weekdays there was school. Saturdays there were all

manner of thrilling explorations and adventures with Elsie Goodman. Their first Saturday trip was almost disastrous.

Back of Doctor Goodman's pasture the Bluff dropped down into the lower valley in a precipitous descent. The first house in the valley was Beecher's farm. The people were patients of Doctor Goodman's, but although their house could be seen from the top of the Bluff, it was eight or nine miles' journey to reach it by the road. The farm-boys had made a hazardous pathway up the side of the Bluff, however, which shortened this distance to little more than a mile, and this Elsie had discovered with joy, and had christened the Stairsteps.

The Stairsteps was her very first trip with David. He was not the boy to stand back where another led, but Elsie, sharp-eyed and considerate, soon saw that the trip, which was hard for the farmer boys and her adventurous self, was almost impossible for David.

"We've gone far enough, David," she announced. "We must go back now."

"Said ye was goin' to the bottom," panted the breathless David.

"I've changed my mind. There's a place just below here where you have to let yourself away down by a big grape-vine, and I don't want to try it."

'Think I'm afraid, don't ye?" guessed David. "I'm going on, anyway. I c'n do anything a girl kin."

He reached for the grape-vine rope, and grasped it with his right hand. But the weak left arm failed to give its share of support, the vine slipped between his fingers, and he fell heavily and rolled on to a ledge of rock, white and silent.

Elsie gave one frightened look to see that he was safely lodged, and scrambled back up the Bluff for the doctor's man. Fortunately he was at hand, and being young and alert, soon took the unconscious boy

from his dangerous position and carried him to the top of the Bluff, where Doctor Goodman had arrived.

Elsie was wringing her hands in anxiety.

"Be quiet, Elsie. That's no way for a doctor's daughter to act. He doesn't seem to be badly hurt, and he's coming to himself right now," her father assured her.

"But, Dad, it's my fault. I ought to have known better. If he dies I'll have killed him."

"He won't die, so don't worry, girl. As a matter of fact I can't see that he's hurt much. Didn't even hurt this arm. And I declare the old doctor made a good job of that, after all. Must have pulled the fragments apart and reset it after I talked with him. You let the boy lie quietly here in the shade, Elsie, and he'll soon be himself."

David looked up into Elsie's face, a few minutes later, in complete consciousness.

"Me bad arm give out on me," he explained. "I'm goin' to try it again when I git rested a minute."

"Not to-day, Dave," replied Elsie; "you're up here on top of the Bluff, and as soon as you're rested we're going to take you home."

"You git me up here?" asked David, in deep humiliation.

"Yes," answered Elsie, briefly, suppressing the details.

The boy turned his face away as it flushed with a crimson wave of mortification.

"I s'pose ye think I'm a kid," he muttered, fiercely. "I s'pose ye think I can't do as well as a girl. You wait an' see, Elsie Goodman. I'll make ye think I'm the strongest man ye ever see 'fore I git through."

Not a word of thanks for rescue, not a shudder of relief at the escape—everything swallowed up in the mortification of being outdone by a girl, and that girl Elsie Goodman. All the drive home he sat in moody

silence, picturing scenes in which he scaled the Stairsteps in triumph where Elsie was afraid to venture, and then pityingly returned to offer her a helping hand;—a little detail which always seemed necessary to make the picture complete.

He did very soon accomplish the mastery of the Stairsteps, but, could he have looked into the years ahead, he would have found that when next they played an important part in his history, it was again Elsie who was the rescuer and he the rescued.

V

INSPIRATION VS. EDDICATION

"EDDICATION," said Doc Williams to David, "is certn'y queer. The more a chap gets of it the more he wants an' the less he thinks o' what he's got. These yere teachers now, down to the school, they knows marvellous things, jes' marvellous, fur as I c'n see. An' yet some on 'em is jes' teachin' so's they c'n earn money to go back to studyin' some more."

"They don't know no more'n you do," objected jealous David. "Lots o' things you do as they couldn't even tech."

"That's true, too, Davy," mused the old man. "But how'd I git it? I got it by inspiration, ye understan' me. Mighty good thing to know the diff'rence atween inspiration an' eddication. 'Tain't everybody as does."

"What you got's best," insisted David, loyal though uncomprehending.

"Mebbe so, Davy; mebbe so. Inspiration's best, mebbe, but eddication's surest. Fellers often think they's inspired when they ain't nothin' but drunk or mebbe the least mite crazy, but neither bein' drunk nor bein' crazy makes a man seem eddicated, ye understan' me. Arter all, eddication's the thing, Davy."

"Your way's good enough for me, Dad."

David was just beginning to use the term of endearment, half shyly and often with a blush, for the boy was troubled with the inconvenience of exhibiting a countenance of rosy red on the least provocation.

"I'll see ye git all I can learn ye, Davy, boy, you

can shorely rely on that, ye understan' me. I've learned ye 'bout the oil, an' showed ye how its supply is reg'lated from Above—sent like He sent the manna in the wilderness—jest enough for each day, double supply Saturday, none at all on Sunday. That's inspiration! Now, I want ye to study hard so ye can learn all about the body an' jest how much oil it'd orter take for each little different part. That'll be a matter of eddication! That'll come slow, Davy, boy. Inspiration comes like a flash—it's a free gift, ye understan' me. But eddication comes by gittin' clear down to bottom an' grittin' yore teeth an' takin' one thing arter another till ye git to top. That's what ye mus' do, boy."

This conversation occurred just before David's entrance into school, it being intended by the doctor as an introduction to what he supposed would necessarily be a painful subject. His conjecture, induced by the boy's speech and appearance, was that school and David were comparative strangers, and he greatly feared that an introduction would be resented.

"How much d'ye know a'ready of what they learns ye at school?" he asked.

"Quite a little," replied David, hopefully. "I can read an' spell 'most anything. I always done good in grammar an' 'rithmetic. I was only just tol'able in writin', but I used to get 'E's' in most everything else."

The old man received this announcement with a cheerful face, but with doubt in his heart. The only significance of "E's" to him was as a word which he could in no way associate with study.

"Likely thinks he kin," he hinted to Aunt Mercy, aside. "Likely thinks he's putty good an' can do it with ease; but they'll soon learn him when he gits to a school like ours. Mustn't let 'em think the little chap's a brag."

"Looky 'ere, Davy, boy," he advised, in pursuance of this kindly thought; "it's allus better to sturt way down an' be set up, than to begin way up an' be set back. Prob'ly best thing fer ye ter do when teacher wants ter know whar to sturt ye is to let her begin ye at the bottom, an' ye'll soon climb up, ye understan' me."

David knew no wisdom greater than that of his simple old counsellor. Much as he would have preferred association with the older students, he meekly followed instructions. In reply to the teacher's questions he simply responded: "Doc says to start me in at the bottom an' I'll soon climb up. He says fer you to learn me all ye kin an' move me up when I'm ready."

The teacher had no way of knowing that, impelled by the school regulations of a great city, David had received five years of most excellent training, nor that the severe embargo which he placed on grammatical construction was not because of ignorance of its rules, but rather due to his more easy familiarity with the loose idioms of his constant companions. So David took his seat among the lowly, not conspicuously enough to occasion remark, for he was undersized and nothing much was expected of such a waif, anyway.

It was Elsie who rescued him from his obscurity. She was at the Williams house one afternoon, waiting for Jake, and looking over her lessons for the next day.

"I just hate arithmetic, Dave Williams," she announced, vehemently. "I wish I never had to do another problem. Teacher says he has taught us the principles of this problem, and now we must work it out ourselves. I'm just dying to get home and have papa show me. He's always so good at it, and I never can see a thing till he shows me."

"Mebbe I could show ye," ventured David, timidly.

"Why, Dave Williams, you foolish boy! What do you know about fifth grade arithmetic way down in the second where you are."

"I was putty good at 'rithmetic," asserted Davy, more confidently. "Used to get a hundred most always. Better let me see it."

"Yes, but there's lots of difference between the arithmetic you do in the second and what we do in the fifth. See, here it is; you don't know the first thing about it, do you?"

But David did. And not only the first thing, but the last thing and all the intermediate things; for David was a born mathematician and this was one of those problems about if A. did a certain piece of work in such a length of time, and B. so much more in so much longer, and C., etc., etc., so pleasingly simple to the mind gifted with the ability to hold it to the light and see all its angles, and so appalling to those void of the mathematical instinct. Anyway, here was the fact. David, from the second grade was triumphantly explaining the problem to the fifth's brightest star, for, except only in arithmetic, Elsie shone supreme.

When it was clear to her, Elsie's expression changed from amazement to amusement, and from that she went on to uncontrolled laughter. David roared in sympathy, though without the faintest idea of the occasion for merriment. Aunt Mercy came in to see about it.

"What's so funny? Ye'll shore choke yoreself, Elsie. Tell me about it," she pleaded.

At last Elsie giggled out the explanation.

"Why, Aunt Mercy, here's this boy been and put himself in the second grade, when he ought to be in the fifth, and just sitting there with the little ones learning two and two."

David turned very red: "Doc told me to. I guess he knows best," he blurted out in defence.

Elsie showed her father's diplomacy.

"Your daddy never went to our school, so he doesn't know how we do. Now, you come right back with me, and if the teacher's still there we'll get you fixed up this very day."

The teacher was still there. He was chagrined rather than amused, but saw that the mistake was easily explained and easily remedied. The boy had done his work, and so little had been asked of him that no opportunity had really occurred to show what he did know.

When school assembled next morning David took his place with Elsie in the fifth grade. Any doubt as to the wisdom of this was soon dispelled when it was found that he not only held his own but developed a strong spirit of acquisitiveness for the brilliancy which had formerly been conceded to certain local stars.

The old doctor was exceedingly gratified that his rough diamond should so early show such a degree of polish. He chuckled over it to every one who would listen; and he had many new listeners, for the newspaper write-up had resulted in bringing a large influx of outsiders, mostly of the class of chronics who flock to the latest "cure."

VI

DOC WILLIAMS HAS VISITORS

THE newspaper man was quick to see that the sudden filling of the little hotel with new patients for Doc Williams followed closely upon the appearance of his story in the *Tribune*. To his mind it was clearly a matter of cause and effect. His article was the cause and for this he had received (and unfortunately spent) a neat little sum in cash. His avaricious eyes saw that there was a much greater amount involved in the effect, and he made no effort to conceal his opinion that he should also receive at least a dividend on this.

The newspaper man had always been ambitious, especially for riches. Working up from the bottom he had won a good position on a great paper, had acquired a measure of social standing which had enabled him to win a college-bred girl for his wife, but had come no nearer riches than the respectful gazing distance which is the position generally assigned to newspaper men. But he had continued in hope until his banishment. Now the ambition for riches remained undimmed and unappeased, but overshadowed by an intense anxiety for life's actual necessities.

This was especially true since the advent of his baby. He made the common discovery that no baby costs as much as he is worth, but every one costs more than is convenient to pay. Unfortunately, too, and oddly enough, this very baby who added so to the expense created such a change in himself that he was not half so good at driving a bargain as usual. He paid Doctor Goodman's bill without asking for a discount, had

the nurse stay three days extra just to make everything sure, and insisted on putting a helpful neighbour on the free list of his paper. He did not understand himself, for he had yet to learn that even as a little key unlocks a massive iron door, so little hands may unlock a calloused, self-centred life.

One thing he did understand very clearly, however, and that was that it was now incumbent upon him to hustle a living for three persons. So he tried to overlook no source of revenue and thought that he saw such a source in acting as advertising manager for Doc Williams.

Doc's sudden access of popularity drew the attention of several people who seemed wishful of assisting him to still greater success. By some coincidence all seemed to come the same day.

The first came in the early afternoon, and departed rather hastily.

David and Elsie were coming from school when, over the top of the hill, rushed two well-dressed strangers, in great haste. Looking down in the valley, where the passenger-train was just visible in the distance, the children concluded they were in a hurry to make the train, though their haste seemed unnecessarily eager did they but know that the passenger, though visible, would be a long time wending its way up to the station. Wolf growled at them, but was called down by Elsie.

The children topped the hill, and a short way down on the other side met the old doctor, puffing up at his top speed, his old buggy whip clenched in his fist.

"See them two rascals ahead, son. Go after 'em," urged the old man. "Let me get to 'em wunst. Wanted to cap'talize my healing spring! Cap'talize it, ye understan' me. Cap'talize it! n' when I tells 'em it give jest enough fer a day's use an' no more, one says they'd dig it out ter git more flow, an' t'other

laughs right out, like the rascal he is, an' says, says he: 'You got lots o' water in yore other spring, Doc,' says he. 'We'll mix 'em jewdeeciously an' who'll know whar it come from? One spring's good as another ter most. The thing what counts is the advertisin',' says he.

"I reckon I must 'a' acted putty wild about that time, fer up they gits an' chases off right lively an' me after 'em with the old whip, but they soon outsprinted me, bein' young an' lively. One thing sure, they ain't never likely to come back here with their cheatin' ideas of foolin' a hull lot of people into thinkin' they was gettin' oil from the healin' spring, an' sellin' 'em a lot o' well water. An' to talk that way to me, ye understan' me, to me that never yet sold ner put a price on a drop o' the oil!"

The long explanation cooled the old man's anger so that he was willing to give up the chase and walk back with the children, but Wolf was missing.

"He heard you say 'go after 'em,'" cried Elsie. "You may be sure he's after those two men. He didn't like their looks when they passed us."

They rushed back to the top of the hill and found Elsie's guess correct. Halfway down to the village the two well-dressed but dishevelled strangers roosted in a tree, at the foot of which crouched Wolf, his forepaws encircling the erstwhile glossy silk hat of the leader.

"I 'low I better hadn't go down, fear I might say somethin' harsh. You children call yore dawg off an' come on home. Reckon they jest about got all they want off'n this c'munity," said the doctor.

Wolf came reluctantly away, leaving the two men just time for their train, and a minute to spare at the depot to tell how a vicious dog had attacked them; a report which did not add to Wolf's credit in the community.

And there came a time soon when Wolf needed all the credit he could get.

The old doctor had settled down at home and recovered his serenity in great measure when the newspaper man arrived. He was not so much impressed by the evident result of the free advertising as might have been supposed.

"How'd ye git the idee that I was wantin' more patients?" he asked, quizzically.

"I don't know that you do. But I know one thing you are wanting. That's more of the coin of the realm. Every one wants it."

"Think so?"

"There's nothing I'm so sure of; and I get more sure every day I live."

"Yes, son, but all bein' well, ye have consid'ble years ahead yet. Let's hope ye'll both live an' learn, ye understan' me."

"You mean I'll learn that people don't want it?"

"It ain't fer me to say what ye'll learn, son. But this arternoon ye've run acros't a ign'rant old man 'at don't, ye understan' me."

Like a flash the newspaper man saw he was on the wrong tack and hastened to change his ground to humour the old fanatic.

"But think of the people who need your help who won't know of you unless you advertise. Think how great a service you would do the public in letting them know."

"Sounds right noble, son; but it don't tempt me none. They's good reasons why doctors don't advertise."

"Good reasons!" snorted the editor. "Yes, because it's against their code of ethics. That doesn't help you any. That same code wouldn't let them consult with you."

"Mebbe not, son; mebbe not. I never had no trouble with none of 'em. I don't know nothin' 'bout their code, but it's right on that one thing, ye understan' me. What's a doctor got to advertise? Nothin' but the fact that he's yere an' prepared to do best he kin. He can't advertise no cures—they ain't his to claim. An' the man 'at would do mos' braggin' 'bout what he c'n do, he's apt to be the very wust one fur folks to trust, ye understan' me. Doctors ain't got nothin' to advertise, son."

"But it's different with you," argued the deceitful newspaper man. "You have your healing oil."

"Ye don't understan', son. They ain't nothin' to me, noways. I'm jest an insterment fer the Almighty to play on. If He wants to use us—me an' the oil—He does it an' folks is cured. Otherwise they's nothin' to it."

"But you ought to let them know where to come to," persisted the editor.

"An' why? Ye c'n see easy that if He wants to cure a body with my oil He knows where to send 'em. On t'other hand, this yere advertisin' might draw folks here 'at He didn't send, an' they'd be a frightful mix, ye understan' me. No, son, ye waste yore time talkin' advertisin' to me."

Disappointed, the newspaper man was jogging slowly home with downcast gaze when he ran into a man going up the hill, and drew from him a remark more emphatic than polite. Something about the man's figure, confirmed by the voice, awoke in the reporter's mind echoes of a previous meeting. He walked slowly and thoughtfully on, turning his head occasionally for another look at the disappearing figure. As the rays of the western sun outlined the stranger's figure at the hilltop, a smile of satisfaction crossed the face of the observer.

"Sure enough," he muttered. "That mop of hair

settles it. Goldielocks! I'm going to wait and see what he's after."

It was a chill evening for waiting and the wait was not brief, but the "news instinct" was in control of the writer now, and physical discomforts were ignored.

The sun was low when the stranger again came over the hill. He too was meditative, although, far from being disappointed, he looked quite jubilant.

The reporter, concealed by a hedge, allowed him to pass; then, stepping quietly up behind called abruptly: "Hold on, there, Goldielocks. What's your lay now?"

The man turned in sudden alarm, with a quick flash of his hand to his hip.

The newspaper man laughed contemptuously: "Leave it there, Goldie. I'm not after you. Tell me what you did to the old man back there."

A look of relief crossed the stranger's face.

"If it ain't the *Tribune* man," he exclaimed. "I thought you was a highwayman."

"No, you didn't, Goldielocks. You thought it was a Central Office man. Highwaymen wouldn't scare you. I haven't seen you since that evening when the spirits didn't move just right. I'm surprised to run across you here."

"It's your fault I'm here. After what the *Tribune* printed we had to close up. So I'm in a different line. Perfectly straight, too. It won't do you any good to write anything about me being here, so please keep it out. Some day I'll be able to put you right up against something good, likely, and I'll make it up to you. I'm just keeping quiet now."

"So modest! So retiring!" sneered the reporter. "You must patronize the barber if you don't want to be known, Goldie. But you give me the straight of what you're doing with the old doctor, and I'll allow you to fold your tent and silently steal away this time."

"There ain't much to tell. I saw about him in the *Tribune*. Seemed like he must be needing an outlet for his capital. So I came down to help him."

"My article, Goldie; so thank me for what you got. But you've got no game that can beat a smart old man like him. Tell me how you effected the separation."

"No tricks or games about it, Mister *Tribune* man. You see me. The Almighty has endowed me with a similar fount of healing right in the heart of Chicago. I had supposed mine the only one until I read the *Tribune* article. I came purely to visit and compare. I also get just enough oil for each day and none on Sunday. The old man was greatly interested. Just as I was leaving I mentioned that my chief trouble was in taking care of the many worthy poor who come from all over the country for help. The Chicago hotel rates are so high the poor people are robbed. I am building a house for all who come, and the Lord is sending me money from all over the world. I never asked him for a cent. He just handed me his roll, and it felt pretty solid. As soon as I fairly had my fist over it I refused to take it, but he wouldn't take it back. The only thing that gives me a pain is that circumstances compel me to leave this country just now, and it may be months or years before the opportunity comes for me to again relieve the good old man of his engorgement."

The reporter laughed a bitter laugh.

"He told me he didn't want it," he remarked. "Now I believe it. But I suppose it was some more of your hypnotism. Well, so long as you aren't going to touch the old fellow again I'll be mum. Just met you by coincidence."

"It's strange how we do meet people," murmured Goldielocks. "Now, here's another coincidence for you. Just as we came down the street I saw a kid

I'd take my oath was the kid that belonged to Gentleman George. I wouldn't have noticed him perhaps, only the kid disappeared a while ago. George heard of it in the mansion where the state of his health compels him to reside, and sent word out quite anxious that any one running across him should let him know. If you see any of the boys, tell 'em to pass George the word that he was seen here. I would, if I was going back to the city."

"What did the kid look like?" asked the newspaper man.

"Oh, a little red-haired, freckle-faced chap with sharp eyes. I'd ought to know him. When I was running my parlours on the South side him and his gang was always hooting me out to the barber shop."

The reporter let Goldielocks go on to his train in silence.

The only red-haired, freckle-faced, sharp-eyed kid he had seen of late was David.

VII

THE NEWSPAPER MAN GETS EVEN

IT was a cold night in early spring when at last the newspaper man got even with the old doctor. Rain had fallen all afternoon, and as night closed in was coming down in torrents. The doctor, reaching home early in the evening, had welcomed the opportunity of an early bed hour. David sat up at his books.

It was quite late and the doctor had been asleep some time when David made a hurried run through the rain to take his customary last look at Old Grey and close up the barn.

He had the old mare comfortably bedded, buckled her stable-blanket around her, and turned to go, when he saw, standing just inside the barn, in the swing of his lantern, a dripping figure of a man.

"I'm mighty glad to see you, boy. I want to talk to you."

David recognized him now as the newspaper man who had printed such mean things about his doctor.

"Well, I'm here," he said, shortly.

"Not very cordial about it, are you?"

"Well, I don't mind admittin' that I know folks whose talk I'd like better."

"All right," the man responded; "rub it in. I suppose, if you feel that way, the old man is ten times worse."

"If you mean the Doctor, I don't reckon he feels 'bout ye one way or the other."

"D'ye suppose he'd go see my baby on a night like this if I paid him double."

"Why would you pay him double? Doc's charges are what you think it's worth. How could you double it?"

"Well, do you think he'd go at all, after all I've printed about him?"

"You wouldn't hardly expect him to, would you?" asked David, grudgingly.

"No, I wouldn't expect him to, and I wouldn't ask him if I wasn't half crazy about the baby, and wife worse than me. See here now, you're young, you ought not to be hard-hearted. You talk to Doc for me. He knows Doctor Goodman's away. This young fellow who's looking after his practice has been seeing the baby for four days, and to-night—when he saw him the last time—to-night—he says he's worse—he says he won't get well. Lord! What shall we do without our baby? I can't think he's as sick as that. I can't think the little chap's got to die. Never smile at us again—never get his little fist in my thatch and pull with all his little strength again. It can't be. It mustn't be. You see, you must get the doctor to come."

David's eyes were moist with his sympathy for the man's agony.

"You're sure you want him to come?" he asked.

"No, I don't know that I am, as far as I'm concerned. One minute I think I am and the next I think it's no good getting an unlearned old man like him to try to improve on a scientific chap like the young doctor. But my wife's quite sure. You see, the neighbours have all been telling what he's done for other children. And don't you know, boy, when his own baby's sick and like to die a man will grasp at any line that holds the least thread of hope? We can't give that baby up, son. It's only a day or two ago he was so smart, sitting up all by his little self for the first time, and just as proud of it as if he knew he was doing

something clever. We just couldn't let him go. I was afraid to go to the house and ask the old man after all the slurs I've thrown at him, but you go up and plead and beg with him. Tell him the other man's given up. Tell him even if he knows he can't save the baby—God, to think that maybe nothing can!—even then it will mean so much to my wife to have had all the help possible to get. Tell him not to come for me, but for the sake of the wife and baby to come, and I'll give him everything I have. Plead with him, son. Ask him as he loves you, his adopted son, to come to mine, my own."

David smiled through his wet eyes.

"You've been so busy writing things about Doc, you never had a chance to get acquainted with him, else you'd know you're wasting a lot of time talking with me. All Doc ever has to know is that somebody needs him. He'd give old Satan himself a hand to pull him out of the pit, if he just held it up. You just go up to the house, knock on the door, and tell Doc he's wanted for a sick baby, while I spoil Old Grey's comfort putting her into the harness."

The house occupied by the newspaper man and his wife was at the far end of the village, a neat little place and furnished by the young college-bred wife in a way which appealed to David's inexperienced vision as something very grand. The old doctor was at home alike in the houses of rich or poor. His eyes travelled straight to the crib in the corner, over which the young mother bent her drooping head.

He gently moved her from the crib and drew it out into a good light. Then he sat down quietly and watched the baby in silence for several minutes, noticing the quiver of the little nostrils with their rapid intake, noticing the bluish colour which spoke of air starvation, counting the rapid, shallow respirations, counting or trying to count the racing gallop of the

tiny, flickering pulse, taking it all in calmly with the sympathetic yet unbetraying gaze of the born physician. Very gently then he removed the covering from the little one, took the feet in his rough yet sensitive palm, passed his hand up the little limbs already wasting in the brief yet severe illness, examined the abdomen, and lifted from the chest and held up for inspection a weighty mass.

"Poultice?" he asked briefly.

"Yes, Doctor, it is to help his lungs clear up."

"Reckon it'd weigh most a pound, wouldn't it?"

"We hadn't thought, Doctor, but perhaps it would."

"The little chap's havin' quite a fight fer his breath, ye see, takin' it awful quick an' shaller. Ye mebbe wouldn't think it but he's a-goin' fifty-five ter the minute, ye understan' me."

"It's awfully quick, Doctor."

"Yes, an' every time he heaves his little chest he has ter raise up that yer pound of poultice, ye understan' me. That'd be fifty-five pounds a minute, wouldn't it, or over three thousand an hour. Sounds so rediklous I guess it can't be jes' so, but they's somethin' to it, even if 'tain't quite so awful bad. Now, if ye want ter use this yere poultice, warm it up some more an' clap it on his feet, with a hot brick to keep it warm. I ain't a-tellin' ye to, ye understan' me, but if yo're bound to use it that's the place it'll do most good. Git his feet warm anyway, they got ter have somethin' extry to help 'em keep warm. He's warm nuff round his head an' chest."

"An' now, mother," said the old doctor as he rose from his examination, "the good Lord, He's goin' to let ye keep yore baby, so put that load of worry away. The little chap needs the best care ye c'n give. He can't get it noways right if yo're sobbin' aroun' in black despair the hull time. Brighten up, girl."

"You're right, Doctor. I'm just ashamed of my-

self," admitted the young mother, with the least approach to a smile.

"It's hard, daughter. I know it's hard," the old man agreed, all sympathy. "But I jes' got to learn you young mothers 'at yore Father's jest as lovin' when the little chap won't play, an' his restless little han's lie still an' feeble, an' his little body jest has to struggle to get the breath 'at orter come so sweet an' natural, as when all's well, an' the sun shines, an' baby sleeps peaceful an' quiet while mother works. He's jest as lovin'. You furgit it an' the worry comes, an' the sad heart, an' the poor nurse, an' the darkness settles down. Remember it an' yore heart's lighter, an' yore nurse is better, the powers of darkness is banished, an' yore burden's lifted. It's hard, daughter, but you must remember."

"I'm so glad we had you come, Doctor. And you think he'll get well?"

"Yes, I think he will. I don't give babies no med'sin. They's too frail. I don't dare even drop my oil in their eyes. But them as nurses can get it safely from the nurse. So set still a minute, mother, an' I'll put the oil inter yore eyes, an' he'll get it that-er-way, ye understan' me."

On the way home David, mightily impressed by the scene, asked the doctor how he could be so sure the baby would get well.

"I wasn't, Davy. I ain't dead sure 'at he'll get well, but I think as he will, an' I've seen sicker ones do it."

"But it seems to me you oughtn't to say it less'n you are dead sure," ventured the boy. "Folks'll say you didn't know an' it'll hurt your reputation."

"Now, boy, I'm glad ye said it. Listen to me. If a patient has a show at all, it's for the doctor to crack it up all he's worth. It may be a trifle risky to his repytation but 'tain't his repytation 'at's to be con-

sidered, it's the patient. They ain't much to a doctor 'at's so keerful o' his repytation 'at he won't take a chanct on it goin' to smash if he c'n give a pore chap of a patient some cheer that-er-way. We'd a man here wunst who'd a great repytation as a forecaster. His specialty was perdictin' the day of the patient's death an' then seein' as his perdiction come true. He skasely ever missed it more'n a few hours. But, shucks, folks got so skeered of him they'd ruther go to some pore old quack as didn't know when they's goin' to die, an' hoped it'd be never, ye understan' me."

"Well, a baby couldn't understand one way or the other, though."

"Couldn't understan' what old Doc said, but he could understan' right quick what his mother thought, ye understan' me. That little chap hadn't no chanct at all if his mother couldn't hope. 'Member when old Bess was skeert by the wolf gettin' in the cow-barn. 'Member how her calf had a fit f'm what little milk she got? Well, this mother's had a monster skeerin' her for days, an' the little chap hadn't no chanct whiles he was suckin' that f'm that breast of fear."

"And that was all that was holding him down?"

"Not p'raps altogether, so to say, boy. He had some other drawbacks, too. That yere poultice was one an' the drugs they've ben crowding down him was heavier'n the poultice, ye understan' me. Doc Goodman, he wouldn't do nothin' like that, but this young chap he ain't got nothin' but book-l'arnin' yet an' the wrong kind at that. No, they was a lot o' things holdin' the little feller back. What I've done, I've lifted 'em off jes' like I lifted the poultice. I've took away the handicap an' now the little chap's got his natural show in the race."

"Oh, I do hope he'll get well." Fervently David expressed the wish. "Will putting the oil in his mother's eye help him?"

"In a way it will, son. Mebbe he'll suck some of it in with his milk. But, anyway, it'll help by helpin' the mother, ye understan' me. D'ye see, Davy, boy, if I'd went off without givin' somethin' at' she could feel the baby'd get, she wouldn't feel much better, but me explainin' jest how the oil goes into her circ'lation an' then inter her breasts for babe to suckle, she c'n jest feel it bein' done an' it'll work wonders for both of 'em."

"You must surely let me go along when you go back. I'm as anxious as if he belonged to us," said David.

It was the second day after, before the doctor and David got a chance for another visit.

A different atmosphere pervaded the house. The sun shone brightly through the curtained windows, a bird sang cheerily behind its bars unconscious of captivity, the cosy home was in attractive order, and the mother held the baby on her lap, a bright smile on her face, as she urged the little one to smile for the doctor.

"It just seems a miracle that he is so much better so quickly, Doctor," was her greeting.

"Yes," responded the doctor, "babies is that way. One day death seems jes' aroun' the corner an' the next yo're spankin' em' fer cuttin' up so. I've heer'n Doc Goodman tell how a perfesser at one of his colleges used to say, 'When ye git called to a baby allus go immejutly, don't allow nothin' to interfere, otherwise the little 'un may be well afore ye git there.' But that warn't the way with yore baby. He was gettin' wuss all the time. 'Pears like he's mendin' right smart now."

"Oh, it's just wonderful, Doctor. And we hardly dared expect you to come at all, such a bad night and everything. How can we ever pay you for your goodness?"

"This yere's some compensation," said the doctor, nodding his head down at the laughing babe. The delicate little fingers were clasped in a tight grip around his grimy forefinger, in striking contrast. "'Bout the happiest time a doctor ever has is callin' to see a patient 'at's doin' well. Fer the rest ye'll pay me whatever He tells ye, an' mebbe yore man'll think a little better of the old quack."

Tears filled the eyes of the shamefaced wife.

"We didn't know you, Doctor. Henry says you are a true servant of God, and he never was willing to acknowledge the hand of God in anything before this. We will never forget it, Doctor, never!"

"Well, Dad," said David, as they drove away, "there'll be a family you can count on for keeps, I reckon."

"Mebbe, Davy, mebbe," smiled the old man. "Ive seed 'em afore, Davy, an' all I c'n say is, it all depends on their make up. Families differs, Davy, ye understan' me. There is families as stays by a doctor through thick and thin, thinks what he says is the last word an' jes' trusts him for everythin'. They's the ones as the doctor's horse learns to step out lively fer. Then they's families 'at's boun' to be experimentin'. It's one thing to-day an' another to-morrer. These is the folks 'at makes it easier for the young docs to git sturted. They is also the ones 'at thinks a doctor's awful slow comin', ye understan' me."

"Don't doctors travel as quick to see folks like that?" asked David, innocently.

"They do wunst they git sturted, boy, but there ain't the indoocement to sturt."

"What kind of families do I want to get when I get growed up and at work, Dad?" asked the boy.

"You'll take what comes to ye, boy, jes' like old Doc. But the kind ye'll do best work for, an' take mos' pleasure helpin' will be them as believes yo're the

bes' doctor to be got. No family, fer that matter, orter call any short o' the very best they know, an' then they'd orter believe him like the gospel. Can't do nothin' with 'em if they don't believe in ye."

"But I guess there's no question about these people believing in you, Dad?"

"Not jes' at this minute, Davy. An' it's putty sure they'll allus feel more kindly toward me. But Doc Goodman's first choice with 'em, an' when he gits back, don't ye feel bad if they switch."

The old doctor was right. He was sent for in great haste a few days after Doctor Goodman's return. David went with him. They found the anxious mother walking the floor holding the baby, now plump and rosy again, over her shoulder.

"I just don't know what can be the matter with the baby, Doctor," she explained. "He's good enough while I carry him, but when I set him down he screams and cries, and if I don't pick him up at once his little hands shake, he gets red in the face, and his screams run together as if he would choke. He's done it several days and I'm about distracted."

The doctor examined the baby carefully as the mother held him.

"Seems real good," he said. "Teeth don't 'pear ter be hurtin' him. Little canker sore on his tongue; ye're givin' him a little feed o' cow's milk to help out, are ye?"

"Yes, Doctor."

"D'ye bile the bottle an' nipples?"

"I do the nipples. I was afraid the bottles would break, so I just wash them."

"Git some o' the kind 'at won't break an' bile 'em. Nothin' cleans like bilin'. Learned that f'm Doc Goodman one day when I happened in to Deacon Green's while Doc was there to see his sick baby. 'Bile 'em,' says Doc. 'Bile everythin' 'at goes in his mouth

'cept'n the milk itself. Ye know the verse in the Bible where it says "Cleanliness is nex' to godliness,'" he says.

"'I couldn't jes' give chapter an' verse offhand, Doc,' says the Deacon, 'but o' course I know as it's there.'

"'Well, 'twon't do ye no harm to hunt through an' become more f'miliar with yore Book,' says Doc, 'so I won't tell ye where,' says Doc, 'but it's so, anyway,' he says, laffin. Now lay yore baby down."

The baby lay quiet for a minute, then set up a whimper which soon changed to a scream of rage, accompanied by the physical signs the mother had mentioned.

"Spunk!" commented the doctor. "Pure spunk! He's jes' mad, ye see."

"Why, Doctor! He's only eight months old."

"Cain't help it," said the doctor. "I've seen 'em show it lots younger'n that. The remedy is to leave him alone till he finds it don't do him no good."

"Let him cry his little heart out like that! Oh, Doctor, how could you be so cruel?" said the mother, as she picked the little one up and soothed him with loving, foolish murmurings.

"Nothin' cruel 'bout it," said the doctor. "It's what he needs. Make up your min' to it fer three or four days an' ye'll have a good baby. Do the way yo're doin' an' ye'll be busy all day an' awake all night with him. If I'm ter be yore doctor, daughter, ye mus' do as I say. Yore duty to the little chap calls fer discipline an' ye got to give it."

But as they drove away the young mother was still soothing and petting her baby, and the next day David saw Doctor Goodman's horse at the door.

Doctor Goodman assured them they need have no fear of hurting Doctor Williams' feelings.

"Doctor Williams knows you were my patients be-

fore I left, and will have no desire to keep you now I have returned. He has been called a quack, but in reality he is the most ethical physician of my acquaintance. His principle is to treat every one—physician or patient—by the standard of the Golden Rule, and so he is almost always ethically correct, for, after all, real, genuine medical ethics always has its foundation in this same Rule."

But the young mother got little consolation from Doctor Goodman, for his advice strangely coincided with that of the old man.

VIII

MAD DOG

GOOD food, good clothing, good company, and a happy home will work wonders for any one. They performed their marvels for David in that first year. By the time school closed in the early summer he was a different boy. His hair was the same colour and his skin bore the same pigmentary deposits, yet no one would have dismissed him with the description, "A red-haired, freckle-faced, sharp-eyed kid."

He had lengthened and broadened, and was now able to take his place readily with boys of his own age.

When he passed his thirteenth birthday he told the doctor that hereafter he was going to take full charge of Old Grey. No matter what time or how cold the night, he always managed to hear if the old man was called, and by the time the doctor was ready to start, the mare was hitched and waiting. Often he would ride along on the night drives. To the doctor's remonstrance he had only to say: "Ain't I got to get used to it? That's what you're educating me for, you know."

Summer came unusually early, and in June the country was parched and dry. A great deal of talk of mad dogs was heard. The old doctor kept his precious madstone in the sacred spring-house, but one day at this time he brought it forth that it might be shown and explained to David.

"Ye see, Davy, it's this way. This little thing—it don't near fill the palm of my hand, ye see—this little thing was tuk from the stummick of a deer.

Well, ye say, what's that got to do with it? Well, it's this way, ye understan' me—deers is poor defenceless critters. They cain't do nothin' 'gainst a mad dawg. But did ye ever heer'n tell of a deer havin' hyderfoby. No, nor no one else ever did. Bein' such meek critters they has this special pertection give by the Almighty. But only wunst in a good whiles is it ever found after death—that's why they is still sech a thing as hyderfoby. If every deer had his stone they'd be so many nobuddy need fear it, ye understan' me. This here one is the only stone in sixty miles. If it's put on the bite an' the venom's in thar it jes' sticks clos't up an' sucks away till it's all went out an' then off it drops. If it don't stick, they ain't no venom."

David gazed at the precious stone with awe, and was relieved when the old doctor took it from his tremulous grasp and replaced it in the spring-house, where it rested on a special stand.

Elsie told him they were keeping Wolf on chain at home, on account of the scare. David was, therefore, much surprised to see the dog one morning running through the village. He called to him, but the rascal only lowered his head and raced away. David saw then that several feet of chain dragged from his collar, and surmised that he had managed to snap a link and break away from captivity. David soon gave up his attempt at following and went over to Doctor Goodman's to see if the dog had come back. Elsie was very anxious, insisting on every one joining in the hunt, and Doctor Goodman offered a reward for his safe return, but no trace of the missing wolfhound came that day.

And then came a day of eventful scenes which lingered in David's memory through the years that followed.

David and the doctor were at the blacksmith shop when they heard a great uproar in the street. David

stepped out and saw Wolf rushing along, foaming at the mouth, followed at a distance by a crowd of men and boys, crying: "Mad dog! Mad dog!"

As the dog tore past the shop David called to him. He stopped a moment at the familiar call, raised his head, and rushed toward his deliverer. But back of him David heard the old doctor's voice in strange, excited tones: "Stan' back, boy! Don't ye see he's mad?" Then a shot rang out—only one, but straight and true to its purpose. The wild-looking creature dropped, and David turned to find that the doctor had seized the revolver which the blacksmith, as constable, kept in his place, and with one lucky or unlucky shot had ended the dog's stormy career.

"He was mad, Davy, sure. Ye see how he frothed at the mouth," explained the old man, almost apologetically, for he knew the boy loved the animal.

"Yes, he must have been mad," sobbed the boy. But it was the first strain on his loyalty to the old man.

Then the crowd came rushing up, hurrying along with them—half carrying, half pushing—two boys, George and John Losteen, who had been bitten by the fierce animal. George, the older, it seemed had been severely bitten in two places, John only a snap on the hand.

"Here's Quack Williams," cried John, as he saw David. "We want Doc to put the madstone on George, Quack. Where is he?"

"Right here in the blacksmith shop," answered David, and just then the old man came out.

"Bundle 'em into the buggy an' we'll go right up home," he directed.

The old mare had long passed her galloping days, so, with her heavy load, it was no great task for most of the crowd to keep up with her. David, now all excitement to see the madstone applied, went with the

crowd. The body of his old friend, the wolf-hound, lay still in the dust of the highway.

For the first time David saw the sacred spring-house opened in the middle of the day. Solemnly, as befitted the importance of the occasion, the old doctor brought forth the stone.

"Don't git excited, now," he remonstrated to the infringing crowd. "Ye kin all see just as well a little ways off, an' nobody don't git to tech this but me. We'll try John fust, but sech a scratch as he's got I don't hev no idee it'll stick."

Prompt confirmation of the old doctor's doubts did not in any way discourage the expectant crowd. It was on the severe bites suffered by George that they expected to see the miracle wrought. But keen indeed was the disappointment and great the disgust when the magic stone fell from the first of these, inert and unavailing. Not that their faith in its qualities suffered.

"He warn't mad! The hound weren't mad," was the cry.

"Wait," commanded Doc. "They's another place to try yet. This'n is the biggest but t'other'n is the lowest down, an' all the venom may have run down an' lodged in it, ye understan' me. Now, don't ye crowd up like that. There, now it's goin' to stick. It's stickin'! Sure as ye live, it's stickin' good! An' thet proves 'at the dog was mad, an' more'n that, more'n that, it proves 'at the boy'll git well. Glory to His name!"

The old man's face beamed with satisfaction as the crowd looked on his miracle with gaping wonder. It was the first time the celebrated stone had been called into use for years, and the long interval had somewhat dimmed the lustre of its reputation, but now it was firmly established, sparkling and bright, guaranteed to persist for years to come.

The reflected glory of the triumph was elating to Davy until he was able to analyze the heavy weight which shadowed it, and found it to be the loss of Wolf. He saw nothing of Elsie, and when he went to condole with her she was out with her father on his calls. A sense of strange foreboding filled the boy's heart at their aloofness. He thought of the fact that the old doctor had fired the shot which brought the dog to his end. "They shore couldn't blame Doc for that when Wolf was mad," he assured himself, but got little comfort from the assurance.

Several days later the old doctor came home with a troubled look on his usually placid face. After dinner he unburdened himself to David: "I shore am s'prised at Doc Goodman. There he is tellin' it round that the dawg warn't mad at all, only plagued. Jest because he found a bit o' rope on his tail he insists 'at somebody had been tryin' to tie cans, ye understan' me. Then he went an' sent his head ter the State House for some tobaccerologis' to examin'—a woman at that. Says she didn't find no nigger bodies in it, consequently the dawg warn't mad. I'd 'a' thought Doc Goodman had more sense. As if they's anythin' left after a dawg's shot to show whether it was mad. The time to judge is when it's alive an' doin' things. When a man's crazy they don't cut his head off an' look inside to see whether ter send him to the 'sylum. They jedge him by what he has did, an' shut him up so he sha'n't do no more. Same way with that dawg. We seen him frothin' at the mouth."

"But, Dad," ventured Davy, "he frothed at the mouth when I first saw him with the kettle on his tail. The time I got him loose, ye know."

"Well, he was mad then an' it's lucky he didn't bite you. Folks gets well of bein' mad an' so dawgs might, but ye can't always wait on 'em, ye understan' me. Another thing, an' nobody kin get aroun' this, is that

the madstone stuck. That's proof enough fer any one."

"Yes, Dad, that's so," acquiesced the boy in submission.

But later on the old doctor, hearing a queer noise in the hayloft, crept cautiously up, only to see the little figure, face down in the hay, shaking with the sobs he would allow no one to witness—sobs for the good companion who could never come back.

The old man backed carefully down, and said not a word; but that night he laboriously wrote a letter to his friend, the Senator. Then, a few days later, as Davy lay one sultry evening resting on the grass plot in front of the house, he heard a gentle sniffing and felt a cold nose poked into his neck. He raised his head to look into the intelligent eyes of a beautiful young collie. A few feet away stood the old doctor, greedily drinking in the lad's looks of surprise and pleasure.

"Fer you," he called, ecstatically. "Fer you, Davy, boy. He's all yer own, ye understan' me."

No marked sentiment for the dead hound marred David's pleasure in the gift. He had missed Wolf, but this splendid animal more than filled his place. And, to add to his value, he was the first pet David had ever owned. They were fast friends from the first minute, the young collie seeming to feel the longing in the boy's heart and joyously try to satisfy it.

Early in the morning Davy ran the three miles over to Doctor Goodman's, to allow Elsie to share in his new treasure.

"Don't ye feel bad if she acts kinder cool to ye," cautioned Aunt Mercy. "They shore don't feel right up there about Doc havin' to kill the hound."

But David felt sure that Elsie would understand, and resolutely set aside his misgivings.

Doctor Goodman himself came to the door. He greeted the boy as cordially as ever, praised his dog without making the least reference to the loss of their own, and was very sorry that Elsie was not yet home from a visit to the city. She might come that afternoon.

David went away disappointed but expectant. At least he was able to feel at ease about any ill-feeling, since Doctor Goodman had greeted him so naturally. His expectation was to meet the train in the afternoon, but some work delayed him and the train was already in and gone again as he started for the station. But from the top of the hill he could see Doctor Goodman's rig, his man driving, and, sure enough, Elsie the other occupant. He ran joyfully down the hill to meet them, his grip firm on the dog's collar to present him. The doctor's horse always took the hill at a good gait, so the distance soon lessened, and the driver, seeing David's approach, made ready to pull up. David saw and was ready with his greeting, but it was checked on his lips. For the little figure in the buggy, eyes sparkling, face white and set, looked resolutely in the other direction while she motioned the driver to keep on.

Davy picked his way back to the house with his heart full of rage and mortification. Aunt Mercy, who had seen the buggy pass, guessed what had happened, and offered her consolation.

"Never mind, Davy. She'll soon get over it. She prob'ly thinks you tole Doc to shoot her dawg, an' jest feels mad about it."

"She knows better," protested Davy. "She knows her dawg wouldn't get harm from me. I don't care. I don't want anythin' to do with her if she don't with me."

"Now, son, that ain't the right way to feel," counselled Aunt Mercy. "Feelin's like that soon gets to be

hateful ones. You go up thar an' explain how things was."

"An' have her act again as if I was the dirt in the road. I don't think," objected David.

"It didn't hurt ye noways like it did her, don't ye believe it," urged the old lady. "When she's thought it over she'll be sorry she treated a friend that-er-way, an' when you've thought it over you'll be sorry you got mad. Little girls an' boys mustn't fight, an' they mustn't furgit that frien'ship is too precious to tramp on."

Doc Williams, gentle old soul, had long since forgiven Doctor Goodman his slighting remarks about the madstone, and joined with Aunt Mercy in urging reconciliation. As a result of all this David made a great resolve. Elsie was feeling the loss of her old companion, the wolf-hound, she was convinced that he was responsible for his death. Very well. He would prove his innocence, comfort her bereavement, and show the sincerity of his friendship by a great sacrifice.

He was up at daybreak next morning, and reached the Goodman place before any one was stirring. He tied the collie at the back door, and left sticking in his collar this note: "Please let the collie take Wolf's place."

The dog whined and struggled to go with him, but he slipped quietly away without disturbing any one. Then he prepared to wait for some word or sign of recognition.

It was not long in coming. He was making a pretence at eating breakfast when Doctor Goodman's man came to the door, leading the collie, and handed a note to the old doctor. The man evidently felt that something was wrong, for he said, apologetically: "Doctor Goodman's been out all night an' ain't home yet. Miss Elsie sent this note."

It was hardly a necessary explanation, for it was undoubtedly a school-girl hand which had written the sharp little note: "Wolf's place cannot be filled. Bribes cannot blot out treachery and cowardice."

"The dawg was at your place this mornin', was he?" asked the old doctor, keenly.

"Sure he was. I guess Dave knows somep'in about it," volunteered the man.

The old man led the collie into the house, where David was still fumbling over his plate, with a face red as fire.

"He's goin' to stay by ye an' be the bes' friend a boy ever had, ye understan' me, Davy, boy," the old man said, as he lovingly patted the boy on the head. "I'm goin' to give ye a name fer him. Ye hain't never called him nothin' but 'collie,' hev ye now? Call him 'Victory.' I guess ye kin call him 'Vic' fer short."

No more was said on either side, but when the old man came home that evening and saw dog and boy tumbling over each other in a wild scramble, again his kindly smile wreathed his face, and he chuckled, gently, "Victory."

IX

THE SAD LADY

IT was at this time that the Sad Lady was staying at the little hotel at the Corners. She was first called "The Sad Lady" by David in speaking of her to Elsie, who, readily agreeing as to the fitness of the name, henceforth adopted it.

"Not," said Elsie, in telling her father; "not that it is the kind of sadness that makes others sad, nor that any one ever hears her telling of her sadness, but while she's just as sweet and helpful as she can be and you just can't help loving her, still you feel all the time that there's something awesome about her. It's a kind of a solemn feeling, like if you were absolutely alone in a quiet, beautiful glen with great massive rocks on every side, and the sky above a perfect blue, and all around you a most absolute silence—not a bird-call, nor the flutter of a leaf, nor the wind in the grass, nor a single sound of any kind. You understand, don't you, Daddy?"

Doctor Goodman nodded.

Elsie was at the age where she was rather given to imaginative description, but the doctor thought he could see enough into the heart of his motherless girl to understand her feeling, and was glad she had made so impressive an acquaintance. At the same time he was a trifle curious to see the lady himself.

This opportunity came shortly after the description. A messenger from the hotel came for him at midnight. He was shown into the best room of the hotel to a refined, sweet-faced lady whom he guessed at about thirty, the pallid face set in an abundance of

curling auburn hair, making a striking picture. At once he saw the justification for the children's title of "The Sad Lady," and this quite independent of the twitchings of acute pain which now disturbed the pleasant face.

The feeling which came over the doctor was one which many men had experienced toward Mrs. Wilton, an instinct of protection, which, in this case, he interpreted as his desire to relieve her evident suffering.

"Doctor, I am sorry to disturb you at this hour," she explained in the soft, gentle tones of a cultured lady. "I am afraid I commit a grave breach of etiquette in calling you at all, for I came here on a friend's recommendation to be a patient of Doctor Williams, and have been under his care for several weeks. He has helped me greatly, too. His quiet, lifting confidence has done wonders in settling my jangling nerves. But, Doctor, my old enemy, tic douloureux has returned to-day. You know what exquisite torture it gives. I feel that I cannot bear it another night, and nothing ever relieves it but hypodermics, which Doctor Williams never gives, so I sent for you for help regardless of ethics and etiquette."

Doctor Goodman listened to her long explanation in perfect sympathy.

"This is not altogether an unprecedented situation, madam," he replied. "I do not think Doctor Williams realizes any limitations in his oil, but he does in his patients, and in his own skill in its administration. He would probably tell you that if you felt no relief and could not wait for the oil to do its work, it was your privilege to go elsewhere if desired. I know the pain of 'tic' well enough to know that relief can't come too quickly."

"Doctor, I try to be brave, but during these attacks

I feel that I would gladly give all I have or hope to have to be free from them."

"How frequently do they come?"

"There is no regularity, Doctor. A few years ago I allowed a certain trouble, which entered my life, to overwhelm me completely and induce nervous prostration. The kind and skilful treatment of friends and the mercy of God restored me to comparative health, but with the tic douloureux as a terrible sequel. Under rest and quiet the attacks are lessened, and I have been much encouraged while here at my freedom, which I have credited to the soothing, helpful influence of Doctor Williams and his treatment. But it is hard to be brave with this torturing pain, and to-night the road to recovery looks long and wearisome."

"Now, madam," said the doctor, approaching with his hypodermic syringe, "I am ready. This is not an ordinary hypnotic, merely for temporary relief. I propose to inject this preparation right into the substance of the affected nerve, and I assure you that its effect is curative if persistently used."

Having cleansed the site of injection, the doctor gently raised the tissues between his thumb and fingers.

"It will be painful for a moment, but be steady. It will be very brief," he advised.

A sure, swift plunge of the needle, a slow, steady emptying of the syringe occupied a long minute, but the doctor was pleased that she bore it without a quiver.

"You are a good patient," he commended. A faint smile illumined the pain-stricken features.

"I can stand physical pain, Doctor, if it's only something that I can feel will have some end. But this torture, once it begins, seems so endless; that is the hopeless feature. Do you really think there is some hope of a cure by your method?"

"I have used it successfully in three cases. Fortu-

nately 'tic' is not so common as to give any doctor in general practice a great number of cases. However, I am not saying that you would not eventually get well under Doctor Williams' rest cure. I try not to steal his patients."

"Would it not be possible to take both treatments, Doctor? You wouldn't mind my getting what I could from Doctor Williams, would you? And I'm sure I could explain it to him."

It was against Doctor Goodman's principles to undertake a case in this way, but this patient was unusually appealing. He went home agreed to his part if Doctor Williams made no objection—after all, she had been very kind to Elsie, he told himself in extenuation of his concession.

And so the Sad Lady stayed at the Corners all that summer and to her great joy and also that of her two doctors and the two youthful admirers, the dreaded tic douloureux seemed to yield to the unusual combination of science and faith.

David's gratification in the Sad Lady's recovery had one slight shadow. His jealous little heart was disturbed that *his* doctor had not accomplished the whole cure, but so much had seemed to be done by Doctor Goodman.

"She didn't give the oil a fair show, did she, Dad? If she had 'twould have eased her pain all right, wouldn't it?" he appealed.

"I ain't noways sure, son," replied the old man. "Easin' pain is one o' the things the oil mos' often disapp'ints me on. Times I thinks 'tain't His way to have pain eased too suddint, ye understan' me.

"What is pain, arter all? It's a voice inside of ye hollering 'at somethin's wrong there. Such bein' so, 'tain't to be supposed as it'll git quiet till the oil has set things all to rights, ye understan' me.

"Now, some o' these smart young doctors know a

heap better'n to let the pain wait while things is set to rights.

"'I've a pain,' says the patient.

"'All right,' says the doc. 'I'll stop that mighty suddint. Jes' give me time to squirt a dose of my patent knock-out drops in there. I'll mighty quick muffle that voice.'

"An' he does, an' the voice quits an' everybuddy, 'ncludin' hisself, pats him on the back an' says what a fine doctor. An' after whiles the knock-out drops wears off, an' nothin' ain't fixed, an the voice hollers again, mebbe some place else 'cause the knock-out drops has stopped all the works an' turned everythin' upside down. An' the doc he says:

"'Needs some heroic treatment,' he says. 'We'll double the dose,' he says.

"An' the pore voice is smothered again an' everybuddy says: 'That's fine, now we c'n git some rest.'

"An' like as not that's all the patient ever does git again. An' they say at the fun'rel, 'Twas a suddint disp'nsation,' they say. 'An' if it hadn't ben fer Doc the pore man would hev suffered somethin' awful,' they say, 'but Doc shore eased him of his awful pain.'

"Or p'raps it don't git to no fun'rel, but jest a long spell o' sickness while nature's tryin' to wind up the clock as was stopped by the knock-out drops, an' finally the patient does git up again, bein' putty rugged an' able to stan' a heap o' poison, an' folks say: 'Well, he had a hard fight, but Doc shore pulled him through,' they say.

"Old Sam Enter an' some of his kind, they does 'bout the same thing if they git a pain by fillin' full up on corn juice till they ain't no sech thing as pain in all the world, and if they is they ain't in no condition to reckernize it, ye understan' me.

"But 'tain't safe as havin' the doc come with his needle, 'cause if they takes nuff to make a fun'ril folks

jes' shakes their heads an' says: 'Another old soak gone. They ain't nobuddy we could better spared,' they says.

"Now, mind ye, Davy, boy, I ain't sayin' as Doc Goodman done anythin' like this to yore lady. Doc ain't one o' that kind, ye understan' me. He uses same brand o' common sense with his drugs as I does with the oil. I've heer'n tell how when young Doc Webster asked him why my patients didn't have no long spells o' sickness, Doc says: 'No, it ain't 'at the oil cures 'em so quick, but it's so plumb harmless they don't have to spend no time recoverin' f'm it like yore people do f'm the dope they has to swaller.'

"So I don't think Doc done yore lady any harm. T'other hand, I dunno as he done her any special good more'n to ease her 'magination, ye understan' me. Ye see, she'd sot her mind 'at wunst that pain begun nothin' wouldn't stop it but somethin' through a needle. Well, Doc, he put that idee to sleep by tellin' as he'd plumb cured folks with a few shots f'm his little squirt-gun.

"But, Davy, boy, she'd ben yere nearly four weeks jes' usin' the oil an' nary a spell had bothered her, though she hadn't gone that long in years. An' arter Doc done his work she's kep' on usin' the oil, an' she's gittin' well, Davy. An' now, boy, jest twixt you an' me, our oil ain't takin' no back seat for no drug 'at any squirt-gun ever shot in, ye understan' me."

X

DOCTOR GOODMAN SUGGESTS A MOTHER FOR ELSIE

IT was to the Sad Lady that Elsie brought her distress the day after she had refused David's peace-offering.

She burst into the little room at the hotel in a perfect storm of rage.

"What would you do," she cried, her voice shrill and quivering, "if some one had been guilty of the meanest, most despicable act of treachery to your very dearest friend, causing his death, and a cruel, cruel death, too, and then tried to get back into your favour with a bribe. What would you do?"

A startled look came into the face of the Sad Lady for a moment at the young girl's vehemence. Then she reached over and drew the hot, flushed face down on her breast.

"Oh, my dear, my dear, what bitterness is possessing my little girl?" she asked, in a soothing tone. "Is it the dear, faithful dog she is mourning for? I know how father has demonstrated that the dog wasn't mad, but remember, dear, the old doctor knew nothing of that. He did what he thought best. My little girl must have no such bitter feelings against such a good old man."

"It isn't Doc I'm blaming, at all. You don't understand. It's David! Wolf was getting safe away, and then David whistled to him and he came running up so confident of help, and then to think——"

A fit of violent sobbing choked her speech. She lay there in the Sad Lady's arms, the tears flooding

her face, soothed in spite of herself by the gentle presence and the touch of the quiet hand as it lovingly stroked her tangle of hair.

"David has explained that to me, dear," the Sad Lady was saying. "I'm sorry you think so ill of him, and I am surprised, too, because David always seems to me the personification of boyish loyalty. I love him almost as much as I love you, and since he has told me that he called to Wolf with the sole thought of protecting him, I am sure you are doing him a great injustice."

"Oh, I wish I could think so," sobbed Elsie. "But think, he didn't even remonstrate. He just left Wolf lying there in the road and went with the crowd. To treat a friend so! How could he?" And another paroxysm of sobs shook her frame.

"But you must remember, my dear, that Doctor told him Wolf was mad, and David recognizes no higher authority on earth than Doctor. To them it was a most important matter to get those boys to the madstone, and it was David's duty to assist."

And now Elsie was sobbing for different cause.

"And he sent me his new collie, just to make up, and I sent the dog back with the meanest note you ever read."

Fortunately the same love that could reprove could also comfort.

"Never mind, dear. I know my blue-eyed David well enough to know that he won't hold grudges. Now that your storm is over, we'll soon see that the rainbow is set in the clouds."

"Oh, I don't want you to tell him I'm sorry," warned Elsie.

"You will tell him yourself," suggested the Sad Lady. "'We should always be willing to repair mistakes."

" I don't believe I'll tell him in words. Let me think it over, please."

Perhaps the Sad Lady knew well enough that in the romantic period through which Elsie was passing, something special would be needed in the adjustment. At least she said only: " Don't let it grow cold with waiting, dear. Remember, David has a right to feel ill-used."

And Elsie chose her own original way.

David, coming home that evening, saw from afar that the collie was decorated. As he drew near he saw that the colour of the adornment was blue. Still nearer and he was sure it was a blue ribbon. Nearer yet, it was undoubtedly Elsie's hair-ribbon. Concealed in its folds was the daintiest little note he had ever seen, and his blue eyes glowed with pleasure as he read, and then started off with the collie on a mad run to Hampton Bluff.

For the note was an invitation, and read: " David, you are a beautiful friend. The Sad Lady says she loved you the first time she looked into your eyes. And I don't wonder. Please come over and help me climb the Stairsteps."

And she actually did allow him to help, in places.

The Stairsteps was always a favourite climb, though necessarily reserved for their plays of greatest leisure, because of the length of time consumed in the scramble down and the hard climb back. It was a favourite diversion for Saturday afternoon.

They had been so occupied one afternoon several weeks later when summer was fading and schooltime drawing near again. The climb was almost over and they were sitting near the top, resting, when they heard voices at the top of the Bluff. It was the Sad Lady and Doctor Goodman in earnest conversation.

Elsie put her finger to her lips in a warning gesture.

" They are talking about me," she whispered.

They were.

"She is a dear girl," said the Sad Lady. "I am so glad she is reconciled to David. She is high-strung and quick-tempered, but generous, loyal, and high-minded in the highest degree."

"She is, indeed," Doctor Goodman responded. "This is a critical time of her life. I feel keenly my responsibility and also my inefficiency. She needs, as never before, a woman's guidance."

"And that is why you contemplate sending her away to school?"

"Yes. It seemed the best thing I could do. But I can think of a better now, if you will assist."

"And that?"

"That is to give her a mother!"

Elsie, her face pale as death, was still making vigorous signs demanding silence, signs which were quite unnecessary, for David, as red as she was white, scarce allowed himself to breathe in his embarrassment.

A minute, and they heard again the sweet voice of the Sad Lady.

"You do not realize what you propose, dear friend. The plan is perhaps wise, but I am not the one to assist you in it."

"There can be no other," insisted the doctor. "There has never before been any one I could ask her to accept, for one thing, and there has never been any one else who has stirred in me the inclination to ask. Is it so impossible?"

"Doctor, I am grateful to you more than to any man living, for I feel that you have taken away my life's physical agony. But there is in my life still another agony which you cannot lift. It is something which you may not ask me to tell you. But—look at me, please, so that you may see how positive I am, while I say that it absolutely prohibits any possibility of such a pleasant guardianship as that which you

offer. See, dear friend. You will not ask me, will you?"

"It is the thing, whatever it may be, that makes the children call you 'The Sad Lady.' But I can cure it as effectively as I cured the physical agony. I know I can cure it. I can't give you up so easily. I am not afraid of it. There can be nothing in your life that I am not able, if not to cut out, at least to heal over, and you are going to let me try."

The doctor's tone was masterful and convincing, but there was no yielding in the voice of the Sad Lady as she answered: "No, you may not even try. We must put it away from us. I cannot tell you. You may not ask me to tell you. But it is worse than death, and there is no appeal."

They moved away as they talked, and the agitated children were able to change their cramped position.

"David," whispered Elsie, "if you ever in your life breathe a word to any living soul I'll—I'll hate you!"

For once in his life David answered Elsie with a glance of indignant scorn; but scorn of a very transient order, for both realized now that their days of childish intimacy were soon to end.

They had been very good friends now for nearly a year. David had not neglected boy friends and sports. He had a close friendship with the big boy he had fought the first day of school—Johnny Langston. But Elsie had been his special companion, his lady patron, his chief counsellor, his critic and guide. Under her influence he had unconsciously dropped his rough speech and manners. He did not realize how much he owed to her companionship, but he did realize that he would greatly miss her, and rebelled at the necessity.

Elsie did not know whether she felt rebellious or rejoiced. Her first feeling was a curious resentment

that any one—even the Sad Lady—could possibly be considered as a successor to her mother of sacred memory. But, after all, her mother was now but a memory—not a very distinct one to the girl who had been so tiny when the substance was succeeded by the recollection—and the Sad Lady had given her a whole summer of mothering already. So as the idea settled the resentment passed, and a little indignation at the Sad Lady's hesitation succeeded. And then followed a hopeful, rather pleasant feeling that a little waiting would see things adjusted and consummated as desired. She believed, from indirect testimony, that the doctor cherished similar thoughts.

So she promptly accepted the Sad Lady as a maternal guardian, and when the season closed and it was proposed that she accompany her to the city to be placed in a school for girls, she made no demur.

She departed assuring David that she would soon be back to renew their fellowship. And neither of them realized that their days as little children were finished. There was no more comradeship for years.

David, having lost his chief competitor, now found but slight difficulty in taking the lead in Latham Corners' justly celebrated school. He passed readily along through the lower grades, and in his three years of high-school work (the county high school was Latham Corners' special pride) he ranked among the first.

His summers he spent developing his body on the old doctor's farm, and thereby missed seeing much of Elsie in those summer vacations which she spent at home.

When David graduated from high school he was a fine specimen of a young man of eighteen. Muscular, broad-shouldered, not tall, but well-set, athletic (he was catcher and captain of the school baseball team),

agile, and strong, he would certainly have been a great prize for the newspaper man and his hand-press.

But the newspaper man had also grown, and no longer looked for such prizes. Impressed by the manner in which people from all parts came to old Doc Williams, he had formed the conclusion that if he possessed any talent he could demonstrate it from Latham Corners, just as did the old doctor. And he had succeeded in great measure. His paper was still a weekly, but its subscription list covered the whole state and overran its borders. It was quoted by the press at large and clippings from the *Latham Weekly Herald* found their way into the Eastern papers. So the track to his door was now well-trodden. He was not rich in money, but the baby had now grown into a big boy nearly seven, and two smaller babies shared the mother's attention.

The paper had a better local circulation by this time, for Latham Corners also grew in these years. The little hotel received so many enlargements that it was entirely obscured by its additions and, as its patronage increased, tradesmen set up in the village to supply the needs of the visitors. So David grew to the beginning of his college career, and the little sleepy village he had found grew with him.

But although Elsie lived much of her time with the Sad Lady, and although the doctor father, of necessity, made frequent visits, it could not be said that the Sad Lady grew more responsive or that Doctor Goodman grew more reconciled.

XI

COLLEGE SOCIETY

THE passing years are very full in youthful days. So many new things to see, so many things to attain, so many startling experiences, so much pleasure and sometimes pain; is it any wonder that in the golden age of youth the years stay longer?

But even the most eventful do slip by. And so it was with these years in the lives of Elsie and David, before their diverging byways once more merged into a common highway.

It was rather coincidence than design that led them to begin their college work together. Elsie's hoyden days were over. Under the tutelage of the best instructors and the efficient guardianship of the Sad Lady, she had developed, and could wear with ease and grace, a cloak of deportment of the highest quality; albeit, she could, and on emergency readily did demonstrate that it was but a cloak, and one, too, most pleasingly capable of instantaneous adjustment.

It was Doctor Goodman's wish that his daughter take her college work in a co-educational institution, and Lewistown offered the combined advantages of quality and proximity.

David was led there because the school offered special facilities for students contemplating the profession of medicine—in fact, a class of students known as " Medics " were allowed a special course which led to a year's credit in their medical studies.

David's chum, Johnny Langston, having cheerfully followed wherever David led for so many years, naturally accompanied him. And so it happened that these

three freshmen from Latham Corners began work at Lewistown University together.

Johnny had relatives in the town, Elsie had relatives living in the suburbs, but David had to get a boarding-place, and considered himself very fortunate to find comfortable quarters for himself and his dog Victory at the fine new home of Uncle Jimmy Wright, recently moved to Lewistown from Latham Corners and "plumb lonesome" among so many strangers.

And now, at Lewistown, it was destined that David's tranquil life should feel, for the first time, the disturbing influence of "society." There was a degree of "society" at Latham Corners, but so light was its rule and so ill-defined its boundaries that David had never realized its existence. Not so with Lewistown. Here society was all-important. The faculty and family connections, the professions, certain families of wealth, some few of distinction, and a few more whose merit lay in their length of standing, were encircled by bristling barriers topped with sharp edges of the broken bottles (or preferably "the cut glass") of society.

Elsie and Johnny had only to apply the keys of parental fame and enter, but David had neither passkey nor credentials.

It was almost the same in the College as in the town. Society lines and cliques were very strict. Here, however, David had both credentials and passkey. They were not based upon the old doctor's kindness, honesty, and good name. They were not granted because of David's excellent scholarship at Latham Corners. They were not given because he was well set up and good to look upon. Nevertheless they were well earned, for David had captained and brought to a victorious fame the Latham Corners' baseball team, and it was conceded that as a catcher his work was phenomenal. And so all that the college "best circles"

would require of David would be the negative virtue of having no "bar sinister"; and his escutcheon might be void of armorial bearings other than two bats crossed with baseball pendant, provided that it likewise bore no stain of unconventionality.

Johnny, enlightened by his cousin George, a senior, had much valuable information to impart to David.

"They'll be hot after you to join one of the societies, Quack," he announced. "There's two of 'em. The Mathoshark is most awfully exclusive. That name's a gentle josh because they all flunked in Math. one year. I don't know their right name but nobody uses it, anyhow. They'll be after you 'cause they want a catcher. Then there's Cousin George's society—the Quidproquo—George wants me to join that. It's very high-toned. They'll be right after you, too."

"Guess I'd better wait till I see that they want me before I say which I'll join," said David.

"Oh, they'll want you all right. They'll make quite a bid for you, both of 'em, you'll soon see about that," assured Johnny. "Not that they take in everybody. There's lots of fellows'd give their ears to join either of 'em."

"Why can't they?" asked David.

"Chiefly because they aren't wanted, I guess. These two societies are quite exclusive and high-toned. Just the best families are allowed to join, and when a chap is elected to one of them it means he amounts to something."

"How do they know what a fellow amounts to before he's been in school a week?"

"Now, see here, Quack," answered easy-going Johnny. "What's the good of your asking a lot of foolish questions? These two societies are the very best, and you can join either one of 'em, as you'll soon see. There's another society 'most anybody can

join. It's called the Carryall for that reason. But it's just made up of a lot of nobodies."

"Here's a fellow coming now," Johnny continued. "He's one of the Mathosharks; name's Holly. Don't you believe what he tells you."

"This is Williams of Latham Corners, I believe?" ventured Holly, holding out his hand. "My name is Holly."

"Glad to see you, Mr. Holly," said David, politely; just as he had heard the old doctor respond to introductions.

Holly was a big fellow, a man grown, looking old enough to be a teacher, and it did not seem amiss to "Mister" him, especially since the college professors had been carefully awarding ceremonial prefixes to all alike the whole day long.

But Holly would have none of it.

"Call me Bill," he beamed, ingratiatingly, as he placed his arm aross David's shoulders. "Bill Holly from you to me. Mister's all very well for the Profs and the Barbs, but between you and me and the other fellows in our crowd, Bill and Dave for us. How about it?"

"All right with me," responded David, candidly. "I never was called Mister in my life before to-day, and I can't say that I love it."

Mr. Holly had cleverly drawn David along until Johnny Langston was far in the rear. Now, quite by accident it seemed, they met Mr. Holly's most intimate friend.

"If here isn't good old Tom Bixby, of all people, I certainly want you to meet Tom. This is my friend, Dave Williams, of Latham Corners, Tom. I surely expect you'll have a treat knowing each other. He's their celebrated catcher, you know. Quite funny you should be the first man we meet, and you our pitcher. Now, if you had a ball in your pocket—you have, well, ain't

that great? Why, what's to hinder you putting a few across to Davis—I mean Williams—right now. I certainly will enjoy holding your coats."

Mr. Holly's flow of superlatives gave out temporarily, and David, a little excited by the rush of events, found himself taking some very warm balls—curves, inshoots, and what not—from the muscular arm of good old Tom Bixby.

By some further coincidence quite a group of young fellows, each with a little crimson button on his coat, sprang up from nowhere, so that the stimulus of applause was not lacking.

"That'll do, Tom," signalled Mr. Holly, at last. "Boys, I certainly am glad to see all of you. Here's my good old chum, William Davis—no—David Williams, the best fellow you've met in a long time, and just the chap to hold Tom's curves. I guess you all want to go down and eat ice-cream with him."

David looked quickly up. "I am pretty warm, Bill, after that workout. I don't mind if I do take a little ice-cream with you."

A look of concern crossed Mr. Holly's face.

"I understood Latham Corners to be your originating point, Williams?" he interrogated.

"Quite correct," David assured him, then added: "And formerly Chicago!"

A yell of glee burst from the crowd of boys as they pushed Holly into the refreshment parlour. One of them thumped David on the back. "You're a catcher, old boy," said he. "But you can hit some, too."

David reached Uncle Jimmy Wright's that evening with a gratifying sense of elation difficult to analyze. He felt that he had certainly scored with the Mathosharks.

A great deal of David's spare time in the next week was absorbed alternately by the Mathosharks and

Quidproquos, endeavouring in every possible way to show the charming side of their respective societies.

It was Tom Bixby's pitching that finally decided him in favour of the Mathosharks. Tom was a splendid pitcher, and David found it a real pleasure to work in his company.

Elsie met him at the close of school, and smilingly held out her hand.

"May I offer my congratulations, Mr. Mathoshark?" she said.

"How do you know?" asked David.

"Oh, you are quite a character already, David. Lots of the boys and girls talk about you. But I knew this time because they asked me if it was all right to let you join."

"Well, that beats me!" ejaculated David. "Of course I've no objection if it pleases 'em. But why should they want to ask you?"

"You see they know I live somewhere in the same country. And they wanted me to tell them if your family was good enough. They asked me if your father was a gentleman and had an extensive practice."

"Well, the nerve of 'em! I've a notion not to join, even now. They don't initiate me until next week, so I can change my mind yet."

"But you won't, David. You know you are really as pleased as Punch to join this swell society. And are you sure you didn't lead them to have any high expectations of your family?"

David flushed with a sudden embarrasment.

"Maybe I did crack it up to 'em a little bit," he admitted. "They asked me about Doctor, and I told 'em he couldn't be beat. Maybe I led 'em to think he was the same kind of doctor as your father. I meant all I said, all right, and I'm not taking anything back, but it just seemed to me they'd think more of your kind, and I wanted 'em to think just the very best of

him. I s'pose I was bragging, but, anyway, Doc's good enough for them or anybody," he concluded, with a sudden outburst of his old, fierce loyalty.

"And John Langston is going to join, too, it seems, even if his cousin is a Quidproquo?"

"Yes, Johnny felt as if he wanted to stay by me; but he said his cousin would be awful mad. So they asked you about John's folks, too?"

"No, they merely mentioned Johnny. You see, being Judge Langston's boy, and being connected with the Langstons right here in town, I suppose they felt safe about him."

"Likely they did. That's what he meant by the best families, I suppose. Everybody knows the Langstons are nice people, if they are a little stuck up; but they wouldn't do for anybody like Doc and Aunt Mercy, you know that."

Yes, Elsie did know it. As she pictured in her mind the condescending manner of the Judge and his portly wife (from whom it seemed quite impossible that free-and-easy Johnny had descended), she knew well that no waif would have been given by them the loving care accorded to David by "Doc and Aunt Mercy."

XII

REPUBLICAN DOCTRINE

DAVID had not passed through the excellent English course at Latham Corners' High School without learning that "quack" was in exact definition a term of opprobrium. But, as humorously adopted by the old doctor and as familiarly applied to himself by his schoolmates, he had accustomed himself to think of it more as a term of affectionate good fellowship.

If the old doctor's standing at Latham Corners fell short of the highest in the estimation of any of its citizens they were at least discreetly silent in the presence of his adopted son, while, on the other hand, there was never any lack of subjects of his benefactions to sound his praises to the boy.

So when David came to Lewistown, while he knew that his foster-father was not a man of superior education like Doctor Goodman, he had yet to learn that he was not of equally honourable standing. There are no prigs like young prigs, and it remained for these to set David in his place, and to show him that loyalty to the old doctor might yet entail sacrifice.

John Langston came early to Uncle Jimmy's one morning, with a troubled face.

"See here, Dave," he announced, "I'm going to quit calling you by that fool name 'Quack.' Now, if any of the boys asks you why we stuck you with such a title, don't you tell 'em anything except that it was just a nickname, like they used to call me 'Nig.'"

"Just as well bury it with your 'Nig,'" David agreed. "I don't mind it a bit from the home folks,

but I'll admit I wouldn't take it kindly from this new bunch. It's different now I'm older. But what got you stirred up about it?"

"Oh, some of these Mathosharks are a bit troubled about it. They wonder if it had anything to do with Doc. Somebody's been saying things."

"You mean they're afraid there's something about Doc that isn't high-toned enough for them?"

"I didn't say so, Dave, and you needn't fly right off. They're a nice lot of boys and they'd like to have you, and you know mighty well you'd like to be one of 'em. So don't let any little quibble keep you out. Once you're initiated it'll all be forgotten, anyway."

The newly developed vanity which had been rushing along with tropical growth had carried with it a craving for popularity, which made this hinted danger look very dark indeed. It would certainly be an awful thing, after all that had been said and done, to have these Mathosharks reject him at the last minute.

David concluded in the course of the day that there must be a great deal of agitation about the matter, for several of the Mathosharks, in various ingenuous ways, asked leading questions. At the close of the afternoon along came old friend Bill Holly, looking rather serious for once.

"See here, Williams," he began. "I want to ask you a personal question. Why does Johnny Langston call you Quack?"

"Same reason some of the fellows call you Skinny. I answer to it."

"No, but where did he get the name. Isn't it a queer name for a doctor's son?"

"What's your father, Bill?" asked David in reply.

"He's a banker," replied Holly, swelling visibly.

"Well, isn't Skinny a queer name for a banker's son? It hasn't anything to do with your father, has it? Don't suppose he ever skins people?"

"Of course not; that's nonsense."

"All right; neither has my nickname anything to do with my father."

"He's not a quack then?" Holly blurted out, with an astonishing lack of finesse for so polished a gentleman.

"No, he most certainly is not a quack. He's a man and a gentleman, and the best doctor in the country," with emphasis.

"Tremendously relieved to have you tell me, I certainly do assure you. You know some of the fellows are so mighty scared of taking in any one that isn't of the first water, don't you know. And, someway, some of 'em had heard that your father was queer, and I just thought I'd ask you straight out, don't you see?" awkwardly apologized the uncommonly flustered Holly.

"No, I don't see," retorted David, angrily. "But I want you to see something. You fellows chased around after me the first day I came to get me to join your society. I haven't tried to push my way in. I don't believe I want to go in, very badly. Now, you tell the fellows I refuse to join, and see if they care to discuss my affairs any further."

Well would it have been for David had he remained firm in his purpose. But the suave Holly, recovered from his fluster, soon managed to mollify him, and departed with his pledge undisturbed.

The three days that followed David spent in the valley of humiliation, wishing that he had kept to his resolve, wishing that Holly's bland voice had never been heard, wishing there had never been such a thing as secret societies, but, above all, wishing that he had not made such a fool of himself.

He was dragging himself dustily home the evening of the third day, just getting back to town after a long solitary walk. Victory, who had tried his best

to cheer him up, was running ahead exploring, now here, now there. Suddenly the dog gave a little run of excited barks and disappeared in a well-kept garden which ran back to a neat home in the rear. Fearful that he might have violated his good training so much as to be chasing some household pet, David ran to the gate and called sharply, "Vic, come here, sir!"

But, for once, the dog did not respond, and looking to the end of the walk, David saw him fawning around a girl in blue, whose stooping form revealed the figure of Elsie Goodman. David waited at the gate as she came down with the dog.

"I have been asking Vic what you mean by hiding from your best friends," she asked, severely, as she drew near.

"Perhaps I haven't been hiding," David defended himself, with a forced gaiety. "Vic was the only one of us who knew where you lived, and he didn't tell until this minute."

"That's a poor excuse, young gentleman. It wasn't so hard to find me around the college somewhere, until this last day or two."

"Well, you know why," he blurted out. "Think what a fool I look. I suppose all the school's laughing at me."

"Now, David, any one would laugh at you if you talk like that. In the first place, only a few people know what the trouble is, and only the very cheap ones would laugh at you for it. I don't even know just what happened myself."

"Oh, nothing much. It seems a miserable little thing to knock about.. Just at the last minute they sent me a note to say that my initiation was indefinitely postponed, and they would notify me when they changed their minds. As if they'd get any chance to change their minds about me! As if I'd likely go crawling up to lick their hands when they got ready

to hold 'em out! Not in a million years! Johnny went to their meeting, and he told me they had a fierce old fuss about it. Some of them were awful anxious to take me in because they wanted me to catch for Bixby, but the poohbah gang had decided that I wasn't equal to the first families, and they won."

"I don't believe I ever did see you real mad like this before, David," she consoled him. "But it's past and gone and you're just as good as ever. Let's forget it."

"I'm not just as good as ever, though. I've made such an awful fool of myself bragging beforehand."

"Bragging about what?"

"About my family being as good as any, and about Doc and his practice.'

"Well, you don't have to take back anything you said about the doctor, do you?'

"No, I don't. But you don't know the worst of it. Uncle Jimmy was visiting at the Corners yesterday, and he told Doc the boys hadn't treated me just right, and what does he do but send word that he was coming up about it. Don't you see? Doc will be up here, looking just as he does at Latham Corners, for all those Mathosharks to guy."

"Dave Williams, I never was so nearly ashamed of you in my life. So that's the trouble, is it? You are fearful that your daddy will come up here, and you are ashamed to have those silly Mathosharks pass judgment on him? If you hadn't so much trouble, I declare I'd be real mad at you. You know they won't hurt his feelings. Aren't you man enough to take care of your own?"

A crimson blush swept over the boy as he listened to the charge. He made no attempt at palliation.

"I guess I'm too cheap for a human being to associate with," he apologized. "Come on, Vic, let's go."

Leading the dog by the collar, he strode away. But

his steps were more decided, his head more erect, and when he reached Uncle Jimmy's he was whistling "The Miller of the Dee."

David met the train next morning, but the old doctor was not one of its passengers. Possibly he had given up the trip. David was a little disappointed at the thought for, after fighting the thing out victoriously, he was now anxious to prove to himself that he could cheerfully bear any jibes that might fall to his lot from his connection with the unconventional old doctor. He thought with pathetic interest of his forlorn condition at their first meeting and how every good thing he now possessed had accrued from his connection with the foster-parent who had proved a real father to him.

The test was only delayed, and for but a brief time. The students were leaving college in full swing when he, a little behind, noticed an interested and amused crowd near the gate. An inward warning prompted him to look up. The old familiar grey mare and dilapidated buggy stood by the curb. The doctor had just stepped out, looking, in the queer, broad-brimmed hat and long coat which he wore at all seasons, like a picture called up from the forgotten past. He was evidently making some enquiries, but David waited not to find out. At the full power of his well-developed lungs he gave a welcoming shout: "Here, Dad! Here's what you're looking for"; and the old man had scarcely turned his head before he was at his side.

"There, Davy, boy, ye shorely are glad to see old Doc, ain't ye? It was right kind of ye to try to p'int the way to an old man from the country, miss, but I'm all right now Davy's here, ye understan' me. If ever ye git to Latham Corners, Aunt Mercy an' me'll look fer ye."

The girl and the crowd passed away, and David got into the buggy and picked up the lines to drive to

Uncle Jimmy's. Strangely enough he had seen not a sneer nor heard a disparaging remark. It began to dawn upon him that the old doctor possessed a natural dignity which dominated any oddities of clothing, speech, or manner, and forbade trifling remarks. His intended heroic defence of his foster-father was lost, but his shame remained.

"Yes, I druv in all the way, Davy," explained the old man. "Never did like the cars, though I know they do rush ye along quick. Uncle Jimmy 'lowed you warn't bein' treated jes' fust-class, so to speak. Thinks I, I'll jes' go up an' see if the old man kin show the boy whar he mebbe ain't jes' right. I've knowed a heap of folks what didn't get on right jes' on account of some dinky little thing 'at they didn't jest sense right, ye understan' me."

"Uncle Jimmy talked too soon, Dad. I'm doing all right and haven't a thing to complain of."

"That's right, boy. The more I doctor people the more I likes the kind 'at don't complain, an' the more I pities them 'at does. But what's this tale about them boys not wantin' to 'ssociate with ye?"

"Nothing worth while, Dad. They don't have to if they don't want to."

"Shore they don't have to. Ye wus allus a independent little chap."

"I ought to be man enough to stand a few little things, by now," laughed David.

"Ye c'n stand 'em if ye git help, Davy, boy. It's the little things 'at makes up life, ye understan' me. Them's the things I allus takes to Him afore they git big. It's this way, Davy. Most ever'buddy 'at is anybuddy goes the same place for help. Some does it on'y when they see death an' destruction howlin' toward 'em; 'most ever'buddy goes then. They's others 'at also turns to Him when the state or nation is in trouble or when they's a pestilence or flood or famine.

Others yet chooses stated times like Thanksgivin', Christmas, or New Year's. Then they's some as shortens the intervals an' brings it down to wunst a week, less'n it happens to be a bad Sunday, an' still others, gettin' down to business more, as looks arter it every mornin' 'cept'n they gits up late or some special hurry pervents. An' then, Davy, they's a lot of others, like yore old daddy, as is jes' like little childern an' has to have help every minute fer every little thing. Depends on how ye live, son. Some lives by 'mergencies, some by the minute. Me, I live by the minute an' has to git help by the minute. But now you tell yore dad all about this hull thing, anyway."

The old man listened with a keen interest as David laid before him the status of the grotesquely named societies—the Mathoshark, the Quidproquo, and even the Carryall, and carefully explained his friction with the Mathosharks in such a way as would give the old doctor no reason to guess that his professional standing was in the remotest degree connected with the trouble. The old man allowed him to cherish the delusion.

"So now, Davy, boy, ye see 'at ye was wrong."

"Looks that way," admitted David. "I ought not to have had anything to do with a conceited lot like the Mathosharks."

"Don't know 'at ye've jes' hit the trouble yet, boy. Bible don't say to leave people alone 'count o' bein' conceited. Awful lonely world ef we done it, ye understan' me."

"Well, Dad, you surely don't mean I ought to run after them?"

"No. That ain't what I said. But ain't they nothin' else ye ought to run after?"

"Those Quidproquos? They'd likely be just as bad."

"No, not them, nuther. But how 'bout that sassiety

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of nobuddys 'at these high an' mighty young fellers call the Carryalls, ain't it? How about them? Looks to me es if a likely young feller with a little git up to him, coming in with them would be like a summer rain on the burned perary, ye understan' me."

"You think I ought to join the Carryall?" faltered David.

"No, son. I ain't doin' yer thinkin' for ye now you've growed so big. But if ye'll think 'bout that man Lincoln, ye'll remember he was fer the common people, ye understan' me. An' if ye'll study what He'd like, I guess ye won't need to figger long."

"Dad, I guess I've been a good deal of a fool to let this bother me," acknowledged David.

"Don't say it ner think it, boy," remonstrated the old man. "Young heads don't allus see things jes' like old 'uns. I thought likely yore daddy could set ye straight."

XIII

DOCTOR GOODMAN'S VERDICT

HAD David been seeking a way to heighten his desirability in the eyes of the young segments of the upper crust who formed the swell societies, he could not have done it more effectively than by joining the despised Carryall. It seemed that, after all, there was a strong element of the Matho-shark clamouring for his election, while the Quid-proquo was ready to receive him with a great hurrah.

But alluring and gratifying as was this attitude, David was not to be turned, for loyalty to Doc was his chief article of faith and such an opportunity to demonstrate it might not be readily slighted. He hardly realized that he was at the beginning of a long series of opportunities to show this loyalty, opportunities that would become so numerous as soon to be seen rather in the light of obligations, and obligations most onerous.

Johnny Langston, without any particular thought of loyalty, promptly followed his chum, thereby casting an unprecedented slight upon the high-toned desirables.

The boys found many good fellows among the common horde and were soon very much at home with them. They found some good material for athletic work, and fell naturally into place as leaders and organizers.

The winter passed on with its various schemes of toil and recreation. David developed both mentally and physically. He was studying a little science now, and showing great aptitude for it. He no longer

thought much of being first in his class. He knew he ranked well. Just where, he had but little interest in knowing. He was learning things now, delving into the real things of life. Some few students, known as "Medics," were taking some extra work in science with the expectation of getting one year's advance standing when they entered medical college, but David was looking for no short cuts. He was conscious of his ignorance and studying for the sake of learning.

At Christmas he went home for the holidays.

The old doctor took him around wherever he went, with great pride.

"Looks jes' like a man, don't he now?" he would say. "Ye'd never believe he'd growed out o' the little pie-faced thing we picked up near the railroad, jes' about half dead, not much more'n six year ago, ye understan' me. Yes, sir, looks jes' like a man!"

"Here's what comes f'm havin' friends at runs the guverment," he said to David, handing him a printed report. "Senator wrote me he's goin' ter have 'em send me these yere reports, an' every week of yore life now one comes f'm Washington. Tells all about what kinds o' sickness folks is ailin' with all over the country; an' more'n this country, it jes' about covers the hull world. It's a trifle small print fer old eyes, but jes' the stuff fer ye to read out ter old Doc."

David examined the document with interest. It was the weekly report of the U. S. Public Health and Marine Hospital Service, and, as Doc truly said, was filled with items of interest from all over the world.

"Why, Dad, here's figures to show just how many cases of smallpox last month, and how many deaths from it. Here's our state, see! One hundred and forty cases, seven deaths, mortality five per cent. And here in the Philippines it shows an awful lot. Look at this! One thousand two hundred and eighty-six cases and one hundred and forty-one died, mortality eleven

per cent. Why, it must be awful to live in that country, just now. And why do you suppose so many more die there?"

The old doctor shook his head gravely.

"They is things, Davy, boy, 'at ain't 'lowed us pore critters ter know about, ye understan' me. Lots o' times I wonder why this healin' oil should be sent up here, way off in this little hide 'n' seek place. Then I think: 'It's jes' His way fer this place. He's some other way fer the big places.' I don't understan' it, but mebbe I know 's much as is meant fer me. Same way with them es the oil don't do no good to. They is such every wunst in a while. I don't sense why 'tis, but I knows well enough He don't noways expec' folks to live on this earth forever an' ever, and I jes' have ter feel when the oil don't 'pear ter do no good an' they goes home anyway, that it was their time, an' nothin' cain't hinder when He calls, ye understan' me."

"No, Dad, I guess that's right," acquiesced David, meekly, his inquisitive young mind yet feeling its first faint rebellion at this fatalistic creed.

"But I certn'y would like ter know how them folks at Washin'ton gets them figgers. Widder Scruggs must ha' ben one of them seven 'at died from smallpox in our state last month, but who told 'em? I guess ye'll hev to go ask Doc Goodman what he knows 'bout it."

David was not unwilling to make a trip to the Goodman place. The doctor was not at home but Elsie was an acceptable substitute. There were innumerable matters of common interest to discuss.

"How do you like the Carryall by now, David?" Elsie asked.

"Fine as can be," he replied. "They're the nicest bunch of fellows in school when you get to know 'em."

"I haven't heard of their doing much new in athletics yet," Elsie hinted.

"No, and you won't until baseball season opens. Then something's going to drop. We can't do much this kind of weather. But wait till spring comes, and you'll have a chance to realize that we're specializing."

"Won't you find it getting in the way of your studies to do all this work in athletics?"

"I'm not going to let it. A fellow must have some exercise, and that's the way I'll take mine. Dad sent me to school to get an education like Doctor Goodman's, and I know I have to dig."

"I hear that he's just as pleased as can be at the way you are doing. I wonder does he ever think, or do you ever think, that your education might lead you to see things so differently that you wouldn't want to practise the way he does."

"He says he doesn't want me to do the way he does. He wants me to do this studying so I can do better than he, as if that was likely. But he thinks that if I know a lot of things about the body, I shall know better just how to use the healing oil."

"That's just the point, David. Suppose your study brings you to the place where you don't believe in the oil?"

"See here, Elsie," explained David, with a grave face. "I'm just glad to show you about this. It's the first time I ever talked of it to anybody, and I'd like to make it clear to you. You see, you don't look at it right. Dad's oil is no common thing. It comes from his spring of healing, just about so much a day. He doesn't control it. It is sent according to the work there is for him to do, and in busy times there is more and in healthy times there is less; and on Saturday there is always just twice as much because none comes on Sunday. Of course, Dad uses the oil on Sunday, but he never collects it that day, and once I went into

the spring-house one Sunday morning with him, and instead of the little basin it gathers in being full, there was none there. Maybe you've heard this before. Lots of people know it, though Dad doesn't say much about it. He lets the oil stand and then draws it off into three bottles, according to its heaviness. You know he uses it through the eye, which is because he thinks the Bible teaches it, and you know lots of people come from all over the United States for treatment, and most of them go away better, if not well. You know about the Senator, everybody does. He comes every year for a little while, and always gives Dad anywhere from two to five hundred dollars. He's about as smart a man as there is in the country. If he, with all his knowledge, believes in the oil, why should my learning a few things in college change me from believing in it?"

Elsie shook her head in bewilderment.

"I don't know, David. The way you tell it I feel as if it must be all right, but father says he's sure you won't be able to study much longer without getting your eyes opened, and, you know, while father has a good feeling toward your daddy, he never did believe in the oil."

"Yes, I know. I found that out the first day I ever met him. But listen here, Elsie. Dad took me from among the hoboes and raised me up. He is a fine old man, loved and respected by his poor neighbours and by rich people, who cross the continent to see him, alike. If God deals with me as He has with him, I'm going to use my life to follow him in using this healing oil. If I thought education would change this, I'd drop it right now. But it won't. All it will do will be to give me a chance to find the oil's best qualities, and teach me about the human body so I'll know how best to use it. If I'd go back on Dad after all he's done for me, what would I be fit for?"

It was Doctor Goodman who answered, from the back of the room, where he had been standing unobserved.

"Not for very much, boy. But you can have your eyes opened and still not go back on your foster-father. What a big fellow you look to one who hasn't seen you of late years. I just stood back there by the door and had to listen to you to find out who this strange man, talking so earnestly to my daughter, might be."

It was true enough, though spoken as a jest. Strange thoughts had passed through the mind of the doctor as he stood in the doorway and heard this budding man so earnestly present his argument to his seventeen-year-old daughter. Surely the boy would not cherish these foolish notions once they were brought under the light of modern science; but let them become ideas of fanatical faith and what light of science could dissolve them?

"Dad sent me over to ask you about these Public Health Reports," announced David, handing the report to Doctor Goodman. "We have been looking at the smallpox returns, which show seven deaths in our state last month. Dad says one of them must be Widow Scruggs, who died last month in his practice, and he wants to know how the people at Washington get at it."

The doctor laughed.

"Elsie says you are a good deal of a mathematician; how would you figure it out?" he asked, with an amused smile.

"Some one sends a report of the cases in to headquarters, and they compile a table, I suppose. But Dad never even knew about sending in reports and never sent one in his life. Do you mean to say that you send reports of every sick person you treat all

the way to government headquarters in Washington?"

"Not exactly that, David. Every state has laws made to govern these things. Most states have a State Board of Health composed of a few physicians who meet to consider matters concerning the health of the public. Counties are required to have a county health officer. Physicians are expected to report all communicable diseases to the health officer of their county. He in turn reports them to the secretary of the State Board of Health, who gathers together the figures for the whole state. This gives him a good idea of what is going on in the state and he is able to plan means of prevention and cleaning up. The officials of the Bureau of Public Health at Washington, of course, get their figures from him. Do you see the value of it?"

"Partly," replied David. "It is only the diseases likely to spread to other people that are reported, so I suppose the particular object is to keep 'em from spreading."

"And also to take measures to prevent their recurrence and to stamp out epidemics," the doctor added.

"But if a doctor doesn't report a case it doesn't get in the record?"

"Not unless some one reports it for him."

"I don't think Dad ever understood anything about this at all. I don't think he ever reported a case in his life. So Widow Scruggs wasn't in the report; then instead of seven there were eight deaths, and our state's percentage is a little more than five per cent."

"Don't be worried about the percentage, David, because it's all right this time. Widow Scruggs was counted in."

"Well, I'm sure Dad didn't report it. He doesn't know anything about such things."

"Unfortunately that's true. The county health officer tried, several years ago, to get him to make reports, but he didn't just get the idea, and so the health officer has quietly watched his reportable cases, and included them on his own authority."

"Who is the health officer for this county?" David asked with a dawning intelligence.

"A man named Goodman, and he's as good as his name," cried Elsie, with delight.

"That's mighty good of you, Doctor Goodman. I can see that you may have saved Dad from lots of trouble."

"I have always admired your father's goodness, David, and have been very glad to do such few things for him as came within my reach."

"That doesn't tell half the story, David," added Elsie, as Doctor Goodman left. "Daddy has always stood up for the old doctor. I know a few years ago some of them wanted him to try, as county health officer, to prevent your father from practising. So he just wrote a paper—it's right here in his desk—and read it to the whole county medical society. Now listen:

"'The right to practise medicine in this state is now granted only after examination, but in the old days it was granted some by virtue of a diploma from medical college and others simply because of a prior practice of not less than seven years. Doctor Williams is among those who practise by this right, and it is as valid as that of the latest graduate who has passed the most rigid examination with the highest possible credit. I want to emphasize the point that Doctor Williams is not a quack. A quack is one who pretends to a skill which he does not possess. Doctor Williams makes no such pretensions. The old man has a supreme faith in the efficacy of a simple oil as a healing medicament, for any and all diseases. He goes

around among the people with his oil and also with his cheer and his faith. He is shrewdly sensible, so he tells the feverish to stay in bed, that the oil may have a better effect; he is frank and courts favour from no one, so he tells the dyspeptic frankly that God's oil has no virtue for the glutton, that the oil and the Bible go together. He has no desire for this world's goods, so he laughs at the nervous wreck who is straining after the dollar, and tells him the oil cannot reach his head so long as it is full of Satan. His people who travel long distances for treatment are compelled to take the simple cooking of the little hotel at Latham Corners, and breathe our fresh air, and keep our country hours. The peace of our quiet prairies is about them, the vexations of their affairs fade away in the distance, the cheer and faith of the old doctor buoy them up, and, of course, they improve—what else can they do?

"'But you may have heard rumours about a certain Senator, and possibly others, cured after eminent doctors insisted on the necessity for immediate surgical operation. Can country air and quiet do surgery? Since some of our younger members may be profited I will explain in detail. The answer is easy: The eminent surgeons were no more infallible than other human beings, and they made a mistake. Their mistake, in all probability, did not lie in stating that a surgical operation would cure, but in insisting that nothing else would. The chief reason physicians make such foolish statements (and they are foolish, for no man can absolutely predict the course of illness or health so long as Nature often transcends her own laws and seems to show a thing to be impossible, only to prove that nothing is impossible with the God of Nature), the chief reason, I say, is because in things surgical the mind of the public is the mind of a child. Let the surgeon but admit that one chance in a hun-

dred remains, and the unknowing patient will elect to take that chance though the other ninety and nine clamour for his life every hour. So, sometimes, the surgeon, with a desire to push the patient into the way which to the inexperienced bears such horrors, yet to the doctor is the surest path of safety, insists that the operation is absolutely the only hope. And Nature promptly proves him to be a propagator of falsehoods.

"'On the other side of the question it must be borne in mind that people with diseases of a rapid, virulent type never get as far as the old doctor's; but only those with slow, lingering ailments which run a long time, being now better, now worse. Even of these patients, as I happen to know, some have left hurriedly to get relief at the hands of other doctors, and perhaps, if a careful record were kept, it would be shown that temporary improvement is as much as could be claimed by any of those with genuine organic ailments. That many suffering from diseases dependent upon a disorganized nervous or mental system really get well in his care there can be no doubt, and I have no desire to dispute the claim. In my judgment, however, the 'healing oil' had no more to do with it than the sweet oil used for the hotel salad.

"'I am asked to draw a few lessons from the doctor's career. I will do so first from the positive side:

"'The Doctor sincerely believes that he has a mission—he is not a money-getter, although plenty of money comes to him—he is not a mere bread-and-butter grubber, though he never lacks for bread and butter. He believes himself to be a direct agent of God for the healing of the people. This being so, he has no questions of 'policy' to consider. His criticism and advice are the same to rich and poor alike, without fear or favour.

"'He has supreme confidence in his medicine. Just

how greatly this adds to the efficacy of the healing agent we in this day do not fully appreciate, but when, as the years roll by, investigators discover the subtle ways of communication from mind to mind, doctors will understand that the patient receives just as much faith in the medicine as the doctor puts into it.

"'He never experiments with untried agents. His Materia Medica is stable.

"'He gives nothing to shock the delicate nerves of taste and cause the patient untold nerve waste from a haunting dread of medicine time.

"'To sum all up the old doctor does good to his patients by giving hope and cheer and sensible advice, and does not injure them by a jumble of medicines likely to do more harm in the reaction than they do good by their primary effect.

"'You may then ask why is not such a one an ideal physician?'"

Elsie paused: "Perhaps I'd better not read this," she hesitated. "It might hurt you."

"Go on," commanded David. "I can stand a little hurting."

She continued:

"'I answer: Because of the things he does not do. He knows nothing of the physiology and little of the anatomy of the human body. Therefore he is unable to tell his patients in a logical way how, when, and what they should eat and drink.

"'He knows nothing of the origin of disease, therefore, he is unable to appreciate measures of sanitation, quarantine, disinfection, and so forth.

"'He knows nothing of the scientific discoveries of antitoxins and other curative sera, therefore patients who are attended by him are denied the application of these wonderful agents.

"'He knows nothing of surgery, therefore, while his patient is relying on his harmless treatment, some

morbific agency, possible of cure by surgery alone, may rapidly be advancing in the body to the place where it will be beyond the reach of surgery or any other method of cure.

" ' He is doing his honest best, but his best is not good enough for his day and age. He is a mistake. He is unscientific. His benevolent ministrations may at any time be the death warrant of a patient, because of their effectual block to more advanced methods of others. And so he is a barrier to advancement. A good old man, but standing in the way of progress.'

" There, David," said Elsie, as she finished. " You were bound to hear it all. I hope it hasn't hurt your feelings."

" No, it hasn't. It sounds pretty bad, but I expect Dad could answer it both by his words and his deeds—especially deeds, and they count most. But it sounds bad."

He went away, and Vic got no whistle for once, for over and over in his mind was ringing: " Standing in the way of progress."

XIV

"QUACK"

"STANDING in the way of progress!"

Can any one think of a more depressing verdict to deliver to Young America. To be incompetent is bad, to lack intelligence is discouraging, to be eccentric is extremely vexing, but to obstruct progress is beyond pardon; for be our direction right or be it wrong, in this day and age one thing is certain, we must progress.

Little wonder that David went back to his studies with a sense of depression such as he had never before experienced. If all his studying were but to place him in a position where he would "stand in the way of progress," of what use was it to continue?

But the feeling wore away under the activities of college life. The days were too full, and the boy too young to admit of much brooding. What would have happened had he accepted the patronage of the exclusive societies is easy of conjecture. Either he would have been flattered into a condition of compliance with their standards, and have developed a feeling of complacent self-content equal to theirs, or, which is more probable, he would have rebelled and created confusion. But he would not have changed them.

As it was, in the humbler society he and Johnny Langston acted as an injection of new life. In the course of the year many men followed them into its membership, who had hitherto held aloof. Johnny—the son of Judge Langston—with his débonair yet free-and-easy manner, was even more of an attraction than

David and his administrative force. Together the boys made great headway in the Carryall athletics. Their baseball team, which for years had been absurdly negative, was soon found by the societies, which hitherto had laughed at any supposition of rivalry, to carry a serious menace.

All these matters brought David prominently into notice in college affairs, and while they did not endear him to the hearts of the exclusive set, they shed around him a certain glamour of heroism in the eyes of the larger body of students.

Lewistown had no college baseball team. Society dissensions were such that of late years they had been unable to get together. So for several years the two leading societies had first fought out the supremacy (the Carryall being a negligible quantity), and the winning team had then represented the college in such few contests as came to them.

This year, to their surprise and chagrin, the Carryall team injected itself into the contest by defeating the Quidproquo team in a very decisive manner, and then insisting on their right to a match with the redoubtable Mathosharks. A challenge was received by the college from the State Normal, which hastened the game between Carryall and Mathoshark, which must necessarily first be played. It was an open secret that the victorious Mathosharks were trembling with their first scare in many years, and that the generalship of David Williams was the particular ground of their fear.

The evening before the great contest David was about ready for bed when a coloured boy came to the door with a note for him.

"DEER SIR: I heerd yoor father had a mad-stone that would cure hyderfoby. My little boy has it.

Please kum and see him and tell me if your mad-stone can help him.

"Yours respeckfully,

"JIM JONES.

"P.S. Please leave your dog tied up at home, as he is much worse if dogs are around. J. J."

David read the note with his mind full of the recollection of his one experience with the madstone. He knew that the doctor would bring the precious stone up at once if the boy was too sick to travel, and felt that no time should be lost.

"How sick is the boy?" he asked the messenger. "Could he go down by train to-night?"

"'Deed, sir, I don't know nuffin 'bout it," mumbled the boy. "Dey jest says to me would I bring you dis paper."

David gathered no suspicion from this, nor from the fact that the note while ridiculously misspelled in some words was curiously correct in others. His warm-hearted interest fully engaged, he heeded the postscript of the note by tying Victory in the yard, and ran along after the boy to try to give immediate relief.

He was not missed until the following morning.

Johnny Langston had been spending the night with Roberts, their first baseman.

"Let's run around to Uncle Jimmy's and see Dave," suggested Johnny. "I want to put over a few twisters before breakfast."

Uncle Jimmy was at the gate.

"You boys must be right smart excited to git up like this," the old man greeted them. "Davy, he's still abed. He don't excite to amount to nothin.' Bet he won't git up till half-past six if ye don't call him."

"Dave's going to be up in just about five minutes, Uncle Jimmy," announced Johnny. "Come on, Roberts. We'll stir him out all right, all right."

But David was not in bed, neither had his bed been occupied.

"Oh, Uncle Jimmy," shouted Johnny through the window. "When did Dave change his room, and where is he now?"

"He ain't changed his room," returned the old man. "Ain't he there? Mebbe he's playin' a joke on ye."

But they were soon convinced that there was no joke. David had not occupied his room that night.

Downstairs in the living-room Uncle Jimmy found the note, which David had left on the table. He read it to the bewildered boys.

"I think I can see how it is now," explained Johnny. "David went after this boy and found him pretty bad, and probably just about had time to make the night train for Latham Corners. He'll probably get back here on the noon train. But it's funny he didn't leave a note. Let's go down to the station and see what we can find out."

The boys were gathered at Uncle Jimmy's after breakfast, still speculating, when Bixby walked in on them.

"What's this about Williams being missing?" he enquired.

"We don't just exactly know, Tom," replied Roberts. "But we feel sure he'll get here for the game or break his neck trying. This note's all we know. We guess maybe he took the boy home to the old doctor, or maybe he's still out at this Jim Jones' place, but all we've inquired we can't find anybody who knows Jim Jones. It may be miles away."

"How about telephoning to his home?"

"The doctor never uses a 'phone. But Johnny Langston has called his folks up and they've sent a man over to find out."

"I'd hate to have Williams out of the game," re-

marked Bixby, in an uneasy way. "I'd want you fellows to understand that I shouldn't really consider it a game if he can't get to it."

"Good enough for you, Tom, and thanks awfully," said Roberts. "We know you're the right stuff."

"May I come in?" asked a voice from the gate. The boys turned to see Elsie and a girl friend. The Carryall boys were all on good terms with the two girls, and Bixby was quickly introduced.

"And he says, Elsie," added Johnny, after the introduction, "that he will call it no game if David doesn't play. That's what I call being a gentleman."

"I met Doctor Bixby once with father, and it doesn't surprise me a bit to find his son a gentleman," responded Elsie. "But why is there any doubt about David playing?"

Roberts told the story.

"That seems odd to me," commented Elsie, as she looked at the note. "Listen while I read this note. Now, just to listen it sounds quite correct English, doesn't it? Isn't it funny that the writer should spell 'come' k-u-m and yet spell madstone quite correctly?"

"I should say it is!" yelled Johnny, all excitement. "It's a fake! That's what it is! Some one's been putting Dave out of the way. See here, Bixby, you don't know anything about this?"

"Not a thing! Honest!' exclaimed the embarrassed Bixby.

"Boys, let me suggest something," volunteered Elsie. "Nora and I came across the street because we heard Vic making such a noise. I felt sure something was wrong. Why not let him loose and see what he does?"

"We're the champion pudd'n-heads, Elsie," acknowledged Johnny. "We ought to have done that two hours ago."

Victory gave no room for doubt as to his opinion of his master's whereabouts. Without a moment's hesitation, he bounded out toward the country at a pace which the boys found difficult to follow. He ran two miles at this rapid pace, then, at a place where the roads forked, he seemed to hesitate; first he ran one way, then the other, and finally, after going straight ahead for a quarter of a mile, stopped and ran back to the fork in the road.

The boys looked their dismay, until Johnny came up. "That's an old trick. Can't fool me that way," he said. "They thought they might be followed with the dog, so first they went a piece along the wrong road, then they came back and started on the road they wished to travel. Did it just so people would think their dog wasn't to be trusted. See if it isn't the same way at the next section."

Johnny's hypothesis was quite acceptable to the excited boys, who were willing to follow any trail rather than give up, and they trotted on after the dog. He led them two miles without faltering, then seemed inclined to break through a hedge, then circled round in an aimless fashion, and ended by giving wild chase to a young rabbit which started from the ditch. Alas! it seemed very evident that Vic's specialty did not lie in following the scent of human beings, whatever he might do with sheep.

But, after all, he did lead them aright, though Johnny, now quite disgusted, declared it was a "fluke."

They were picking their way through a stretch of woods, hardly knowing what to do next, when a crashing through the underbrush was heard. Vic rushed madly toward the noise, barking excitedly, and as they scrambled after him they saw him jumping ecstatically around a young fellow who might possibly be David; but David amply disguised. His clothing torn, his face scratched by the brush, except where

covered by an old soft hat which was pulled down over his eyes, shoeless, covered with dirt, certain mysterious marks printed on each cheek, it was a most wild-looking David. He quieted the dog's demonstrations rather harshly for him, as the boys came up, and there was that in his looks that kept back any jocular salutations from the lips of the boys.

"What time is it, fellows?" he asked, shortly.

"Just about ten o'clock, old boy," replied Johnny.

"All right, then. We'll be in that game at two this afternoon, unless something worse than this happens. Now, don't say a word, boys. We'll talk about this later on. Johnny, run to the road and stop that buggy, so I can get to town without any more damage to my feet."

There was just room for David and Johnny in the buggy. They drove on, leaving the wondering boys to their speculating, homeward march.

"You sit on my lap, Johnny, and no one will see me. Show the man how to drive in the back way. I want to get through without a whole lot of questions."

Johnny, wondering, was conscious of the tension, and did his part nobly by keeping the driver engaged in talk on general subjects until they drove in through the alley, and, by good fortune, were able to escape to David's room without observation.

"Now, Dave, you tell me what's the matter, mighty quick," exploded Johnny. "I've been sitting on myself all the way home, and I want to know something about this before I bust."

David had flung himself down on the bed. Now he spoke up, with averted face and in a curiously strained, hard voice.

"I just couldn't talk to the bunch there, Johnny. I had to get off alone where I could find out what they really did to me. If they've marked me for life I don't know how I'll ever tell Doc about it. They

said it was an acid and would brand me for life, the brutes. I don't believe it, though. It burned some, but not enough for that, and they wouldn't have dared. They just wanted to throw a scare into me. But I tell you it was a miserable way to spend a night—tied hand and foot, and the only thing that kept you from worrying your head off about the ball game the worse fear, that this marking was really a brand. See what it is! Look now!"

He raised his head to the light, and Johnny could clearly see across the forehead, in spite of mud and grime, the black word: "Quack." On each cheek was an attempt at the same word, though not so clear.

Johnny sat back in pity and amazement.

"What an abominable outrage!" he cried. "The scoundrels! Who did that, David? We'll make 'em pay for it if they're anywhere on top of the ground. We're wasting time right now when we ought to be getting after them."

"That's just what I was afraid of with you fellows, Johnny. That's the reason I didn't stop to tell you all about it. You fly right off the handle. I've had all night to study this thing over, and I want to tell you that there's a number of reasons why we aren't going to do anything nor even say anything about it. Do you suppose I want everybody talking about that word in connection with me and Dad? Not by a long shot! Then, if it's just hazing and no harm done, I'm no baby to make a fuss about what lots of other fellows have had to take. The question is, will it wash off?"

Johnny was back in a minute or two with soap and warm water. The mud came off. The letters showed more plainly than ever! Johnny looked up with a white, scared face.

"Dave, I'm afraid it's going to stick," he whispered, huskily.

David laughed.

"I fought that out in the night," he said. "While it was dark and I was tied up there, and everything was upside down, I did get scared for a while, but I convinced myself from the feel of it that it hadn't eaten through the skin, and I know enough chemistry to know there's some solvent for it. You slip over to Science Hall and see if Professor Evans is there. If he is, explain things, on the quiet, and get him to come over."

When the professor—a young fellow in his twenties—came hurrying in, he carried a bottle in his hand all ready for use.

"I knew as soon as Langston stated the matter just what had been used," he explained, as he applied the liquid. "We had the subject discussed in Senior Chemistry only last week, and this very matter of marking the skin was discussed. So I brought a bottle of the solvent right with me, and I should have been much surprised if it had failed. There! Your face is as good as ever, except for the red marks, which will soon disappear. Now, Williams, give me the names of the rascals who have been insulting you, and the faculty will soon put an end to this."

"I hope you'll excuse me in this, Professor. You can see why I'd rather not have the thing talked about. Besides, I couldn't really tell you anything. They threw a sack over my head first thing. Then they trussed up my hands and feet. Then they took off the sack and blindfolded me. The one who did the talking spoke in a voice I'd never heard before. He said they were a medical society to expose quackery, and they were going to mark me up so the world would always know I was a quack, and I would be unable to fool any one. The worst of it was when they started to put the stuff on, and he said it was an acid that would brand me. It was awful while I lay there, not

able to move hand or foot, and fearful that they might be some fools or fiends who actually would do such a thing. Then, through that awful long night, it was pretty hard to keep from thinking maybe I was marked for life. When morning came I managed to get the bandage on my eyes wriggled around so I could see a little. I was in an old shack without furniture. Two big coloured fellows sat on a log by the window. When I begged them to let me up they showed me a paper which said: 'The guards will keep you here two days while the acid eats in.' I offered every kind of thing, from all the money I had down to a long term in the pen, to those fellows, but they wouldn't listen. I had managed to work my hands loose, but it didn't do any good with two men there.

"Finally it just seemed to me if I couldn't get away I'd have a fit. And then I thought how a fit scares a coloured man, and I decided to try one. I hollered, 'Run for a doctor. I'm going to have a fit.' Well, sir, it worked. One of those chaps started off a-pelting and the other came and leaned over me to quiet my shaking, and lucky for me he was the smaller man, so in about a minute I had him underneath me, and got hold of his knife and cut my feet loose. I had no shoes and didn't stop to find any. I just grabbed the old hat to hide my face, and started for the highway before the other man had a chance to get back. And then I ran across you fellows. And now it's all over, and I want an hour or two of quiet to get in shape for that game."

But there was no quiet just then, for the crowd of boys had just reached the house, and came trooping in.

David was in such good spirits to find himself none the worse for his hard experience, that he repeated his tale now with a decided relish.

"And do you think we're going to sit still and let

a dirty, low-down trick like that go without a word, Dave Williams?" shouted Roberts.

"That's what I expect of you," assured David.

"I, for one, can't do anything of the kind," declared Bixby. "I've got to know who did it. As it stands, the blame rests on the Mathosharks. Here's Williams spirited away to be held two days, just the days the match games must be played. Don't you see what it looks like? It's up to us to clear ourselves."

"You won't need to clear yourselves, Bixby, because no one but this crowd need ever know. I don't say I didn't think of the Mathosharks. But it might just as well have been the Medics, who are always hazing some one. Now, if the Professor can set aside his conviction that he ought to report this to the faculty, you fellows can certainly keep yourselves quiet. I'm back now, just as good as ever, and much as we hate to do it we're going to beat you fellows, Bix. So let's say no more about it."

But the Carryalls did not beat the Mathosharks, although they were acclaimed the winners, for the games were never played.

When Bixby left the boys he took with him the note signed "Jim Jones." He went straight to the room of his old friend, Bill Holly, and a look of determination hardened on his usually placid countenance as he went.

"This is short notice, Holly," he said as he entered, "but one of us is going to quit our team. Either you quit playing first base and manager, or I quit pitching."

Holly looked up at this astounding announcement, but as Bixby stared him steadily in the face his colour changed.

"You're crazy, Tom," he said, sharply. "What are you talking about, anyway?"

"You know what I'm talking about, Holly. I read the note that was left at Dave Williams'. I thought

I recognized the tint of paper as soon as I saw it. Now, I'm going to match it with that pad on your desk, and if I find a stub that corresponds with this sheet your game's up."

He reached across the desk for the pad, and at the same moment the owner made a jump for it. They came together in a wild tussle, and a few minutes later Bill Holly suffered the ignominy of being ejected from his own door in a tumbled heap.

. . . . . .

It was a splendid day for baseball, a quiet, lazy atmosphere warm enough to make the bleachers comfortable, yet not so hot as to wilt one's linen and enthusiasm; just the day to lounge easily in a judicial attitude of mind, if not of body, and express to the associated judges one's real opinion of the umpire's astigmatism.

The crowd had assembled for the important game. The Carryalls came on the field in their new uniforms. The band played. The rooters in the grandstand shouted with violent effort. The girls waved their parasols. Still the Mathosharks came not.

A messenger approached the umpire. A conference of excited officials took place. Then the umpire reached for his megaphone and called in discordant tones: "The Mathoshark team declines to play owing to illness of two members. The game and the series are forfeited to the Carryall team, who will represent the college in baseball this season!"

When the State Normal team came, the Carryalls, representing their college for the first time in their starved existence, performed gloriously, winning by a gratifying score. In the ratification of that night Williams and Langston, the general and his pitcher, were the heroes of the hour.

So David went back to Latham Corners at the end

of his first year, bearing a certain degree of honour, and if not a member of an exclusive society, at least an honoured leader in a popular one.

So far his loyalty to the old doctor and fulfillment of his plans were rose-crowned. Incidentally he had discovered a few thorns, and knew not what the future might develop.

XV

GOLDIELOCKS AND GOLDEN FEES

WHEN David came home for his summer vacation he was surprised to find Dummy turned out of his little house.

Dummy had lived along all these years without any effort to pass on, and had seemed in a fair way to fulfil Aunt Mercy's prediction that he would stay forever. He was never in any one's way, his needs very simple and his wants few, which served in some measure to palliate the fact that he toiled not, neither did he spin.

But when David went to college he had introduced a new order of affairs by initiating Dummy into the chores which he had been accustomed to perform, and on his previous visits home he had been much gratified to see how well the gap was filled. So he went at once to Aunt Mercy for an explanation of the absence.

"What's become of Dummy, Aunt Mercy?" he asked, "and who's this chap in the little house. Doesn't look just like a tramp though he's queer enough. Seems something familiar about his looks, too. When did he come and how long is Dummy going to let him stay?"

"Dummy ain't got nothin' to do with it, Davy," the old lady answered. "He's been here several weeks, and Dummy has moved hisself up over the barn."

"Why did he do that, Aunt Mercy? There's always been room for two."

"Dummy moved of his own choosin'. Jes' didn't seem to like to stay."

"The old boy must feel like a man put out of his

own house, after all these years. I must run up and see him. How long's the stranger going to stay?"

"A long time we hope, Davy. He's a great man. Wait till ye hear Doc tell about him."

But David got his first account from Dummy, who did not think so highly of the stranger. He was the first man who had ever refused to pass along when notified that his presence was no longer desired, and Dummy had his opinion of him.

The stranger likewise had his opinion of Dummy, and had expressed it in a very emphatic manner.

"I know all about you," he declared. "You're the thing the old man keeps here to clean out the oil Sundays and put it in the other days. Can't fool me. I guessed you from the first. Now, you leave me alone or I'll show you up."

This may have been bluster, but was probably an expression of his real opinion, for it would be impossible for him to conceive that the old man would house Dummy, year after year, without a purpose.

Dummy tried his best to convey this to David, but succeeded only in giving an impression of general dislike.

Not so with the old doctor. He was eager to talk of their visitor.

"He's a great man, Davy. The little house warn't built for nothin', arter all. It's surely harbourin' His messenger now, fur whether he's a prophet or no he's a great man. The things he c'n do with the oil is jes' miraculous, ye understan' me. 'Tain't nothin' new to him, ye see. Right in the heart of Chicago he's had a healin' spring jes' like this for years an' years. He came to see me wunst years ago; jes' arter you came, it was. Many a time I've had him in mind sence, but he's ben too busy to come again. Now he's here 'cause he's all wore out in body an' has to git rested. Says himse'f 'at he's wickedly yielded too

much f'm his own vital force, instid o' drawin' it all f'm the same mighty source as the oil comes f'm. So he ain't seein' nobuddy but jes' one or two special patients as I got him to look at, an' we ain't to tell nobuddy he's here so he won't be overrun. He ain't even givin' his name. Says we c'n jes' call him 'Sent,' which he shorely is."

A year ago David would have taken this with the most implicit trust. But the one year in college had already made its impress.

"You're quite sure he's all right, Dad?" he asked, rather anxiously. "Sounds just a little bit queer to me. I lived right in the heart of Chicago all my life till I came here, and I never heard of there being a healing spring there."

"Davy, boy, ye mus' learn yoreself to be more trustin'. He backs up what he says. There's old Katy. She's been havin' her spells wuss an' wuss all the time, ye understan' me. 'Peared like nobuddy couldn't help her none. The oil didn't take hold at all, the way I used it. But he 'lowed he could help her his way. Took an' put it in a little bright, sparklin' bottle he's got, had her fix her eyes on it until she 'lowed she was plumb sleepy. Then he says, 'Well, it's goin' to cure ye,' he says. 'Go to sleep a little bit,' he says. She done it right off. But he says in jest a minute, 'Better wake up, now,' he says. 'Ye won't have no more spells,' he says. 'The oil's cured ye,' he says. Well, that was fust day he come—three weeks ago—an' she ain't had none since. She's cured, Davy, an' he done it an' I couldn't. So he's a better Messenger'n me, anyway. Ain't that so?"

"No, it isn't, Dad. There's no one better than you," David smiled. "But I suppose that shows there's something to him."

"Yore words don't fit, Davy. A man as c'n do things like that has a whole lot to him. On'y thing

I haven't thought him right on is fees. He wants to charge fees—big fees—just f'm these strangers 'at come here an' is well off, ye understan' me."

"I don't see anything very wrong about that, Dad. You'd be able to build the new Inn sooner. Doctor Goodman charges fees."

"An' I ain't sayin' it ain't all right fer him. Doctors has better chances to earn crowns of glory 'an any men livin', but it'd be an awful mistake for a body to s'pose they's allus huntin' 'em. They is mos'ly human bein's lookin' for daily bread an' goin' into crown-gettin' occasional, by the way. An' they likely spent a hull lot o' time an' money gettin' ready to work an' they don't commonly charge no fee too big, ye understan' me.

"But it's different with me, Davy. Ye see I ain't a business doctor, not at all. I never spent no money on eddication. All I've got that-er-way is the common sense an' the eyes to see an' ears to hear thet He give me. I don't have to have no int'rust on my 'nvestment, ye see, 'cause I ain't got no 'nvestment. People as comes ter me comes cos He sends 'em, an' He'll tell 'em what ter pay, sure.

"But I ain't fer a minute sayin' as it ought ter be that-er-way with others, Doc Goodman, f'r instance. Doc's eddication cost ten thousan' dollars—it tuk all his father left him, I've heer'n tell. Doc could hev put that ten thousan' out at good security an' had 'nuff to live on in these parts right comf'ble. Doc's got a clear title ter git some returns on his 'nvestment. He never charges no high prices, but he's got a right ter what he does, an' 'bout the only way ter figger it is to set a reasonable price for a visit or for the med'sin an' make everybuddy pay it alike.

"Doc don't never press folks what is too poor ter pay, an' if them what kin pay is charged a little more'n they might have to be if everybuddy paid up, still they

ain't payin' none too much. You kain't set no price too high fer a cure. 'Smatter of fact I've heer'n Doc say he don't aim to sell cures, noway. Ses he: 'Ef I could guarantee a cure fer everythin' an' sell it I wouldn't need to dicker with no one 'bout prices. I c'd jes' name my figger—so much for a cure for asthmy—so much for a cure for consumption—an' so on, an' the sick folks'd find the money someways. But sence I kain't always d'liver the goods,' he says, 'all I hev to sell is my best efforts, an' so I puts a moderate price on 'em an' sometimes a patient draws a prize package in a cure, which, sence he on'y paid two dollars fer it, he don't noway 'preciate, an' sometimes he gits a trifle improved an' is just moderate satisfied, an' sometimes he don't git no better at all an' says doctors is all frauds an' humbugs, anyways, an' won't pay no bill, an' fergits 'at all I'm chargin' him is jest a moderate sum for the time I took to do my best for him, nothin' bein' promised about a cure one way ner t'other.'

"Puts me in min' of when old Slosby was doctorin' for his rheumatiz with Doc Goodman. He was putty bad—had to use a crutch for one leg good deal of the time but not altogether. He was gittin' no better putty fast an' just then comes harvest time, an' Doc sends in his bill. Well, he ramped aroun' in great style 'bout big bill for nuthin'. 'Nobuddy else does business that-er-way,' says he to Doc. Says he, 'When I buy meat of the butcher I gets the meat an' more'n that I makes him cut out the bone. When I buy coal I gets the coal an' a weigh-ticket to show it's good full weight. When I buy groceries I gets the food, an' if 'tain't all fresh and good, back she goes. But you,' he says, 'I goes to you to buy a cure an' I don't git nothin' at all,' he says. 'Ye don't even send me a chunk o' bone, ye don't even send me a short-weight load, ye don't even send me a sp'iled lot o' canned

goods, ye don't sen' me nothin' but a big bill. It fair warms me up,' he says, 'an' that's more'n yore med'sin ever done,' he says. 'I'll say that much,' he says.

"Well, Doc, he stood by with that quiet smile he wears, never flustered nor heated ner nothin', 'tain't no ordinary man c'n fluster Doc. He jes' waited till Slosby's all through an' coolin' off, then he says, says he, 'What was it ye said 'at ye aimed to buy of me?' he says.

"This started Slosby agen, an' he fairly bellered. 'A cure,' he hollered, 'that's what I aimed ter buy, but did I git it? Look yere,' says he, an' he shook the one crutch he used right in Doc's face.

"'Yo're mistook, Slosby,' says Doc. 'Ye didn't contract with me for no cure,' says he. 'Ye couldn't buy a cure, neither you ner no other man. They ain't no man livin' ever had money 'nuff to buy a cure an' they ain't no man livin' ever had cures to sell.' Ye see Doc b'lieves putty nigh same as me, fer he goes on to say, 'Cures comes f'm Almighty God an' they ain't no price c'n be set on 'em an' they ain't no man c'n deliver 'em. What ye undertook ter buy of me was my services, an' ye got 'em to the best of my ability. An',' says he, 'they was d'livered all meat, full weight, an' all sound an' ye should pay for 'em gladly, even if they didn't do ye a lick o' good. Though,' says he, 'that's somethin' ye kain't say, fer well ye know of the nights yore pain's been eased an' the days ye've been braced up to do business, when afore ye couldn't do a lick o' nothin'. Pay that bill, Slosby,' he says.

"Well, Slosby, he ain't so thick 'at he couldn't see Doc had a little the best of it, so he paid up, but, says he, 'It's the last time,' says he. 'I take a city paper,' says he, 'an' I know where I kin get a square deal,' says he.

"'It's yore pervilege to go where you please,' says Doc, 'an' if ye get a year's medical service as good as

mine anywheres else for sixty-four dollars'—which was his bill—'let me know who the sucker is,' says Doc.

"Well, fust time Slosby feels able to git ter the cars, down to the city he goes. He looks all over the advertysements an' finally picks on a fellow who guarantees a cure an' gives a contrack to do it. Miss Slosby was along to tek keer of him, though the hull thing was agen her jedgment. 'It'll be like the time ye tuk me to the painless dentist,' she says. 'He guaranteed it wouldn't hurt none, an' when I hollered he had the impidence to say he didn't feel no hurtin', which prob'ly he didn't.' But Slosby was set, an' she helped him up to the Guaranty Doctor's office. She said when she got home she never did see sech whiskers, they was as good as in the advertysement, but she b'leeved 'at nothin' else in the advertysement come true.

"The feller talked up real nice to Slosby, an' got sech a history as Doc Goodman never enquired after, but Miss Slosby noticed that he seemed 'bout's much int'rusted in his feenances as in his fambly history. When he got all through, he brought Slosby a paper an' says to write his name. 'What's this fer?' asks Slosby, right sharp. 'This is the contrack,' says Doctor Slick. 'You know a contrack's no good if it ain't signed.' Slosby read it over careful. 'But this says I'm to pay you two hundred dollars,' says he. 'I ain't goin' to sign nuthin' of the kind.'

"'Read it ag'in,' says the doc. 'You'll see it says you ain't to pay me nothin' until the treatment's satisfactory to you, then this yere paper becomes a note for two hundred dollars. You don't objec' to payin' two hundred dollars for a cure, do you?'

"'No,' says Slosby, 'not for a cure. That's what I'm after is to buy a cure.'

"'Well,' says the feller, 'they ain't nobody better

qualified ter say when he's cured than you, an' this yere contrack leaves it fer you to say. But ye know a contrack's a contrack. Ye wouldn't expec' me to do it all an' you do nothin'. Ye ain't that kind of a bonehead, be ye?'

"Well, this seemed a putty good line of talk; neither Slosby ner the missus was goin' to objec' ter two hundred dollars fer a cure, so, not ter seem too little, Slosby signed her up, sayin' to himself 'at he'd bet he'd be good an' cured afore he'd 'low he was satisfied.

"Slosby never would tell jes' what they done to him, but Miss Slosby admits it were some few. 'Bout the third day he were ready to quit, but Miss Slosby got to readin' their copy of the contrack over, an', sure enough, she found that if he quit before the month's treatment was up the note come due at wunst. This made Slosby hot but he's determined ter stick it out, so back he went, an' he told the contrack doctor his opinion in real langwidge. But Doctor Slick warn't put out.

"'You ain't reasonable,' says he. 'Tain't to be expected I c'n cure ye ef you don't stay by the treatment,' says he; an' Slosby had to admit they was some sense to that. Then that day the doc changed his treatment an' he give Slosby somethin' as jest made him feel glorious. He slep' all night and' got up nex' mornin', took a little more dope, an' tole Miss Slosby he's gittin' better ever' minute. Time he got to the doctor's shop he wasn't to hold ner to bind—wanted to do a hornpipe, hugged the doc in a reg'lar strangle holt, an' told him he was goin' home to die no more.

"Well, the doc brought out a little paper, an' Slosby put his name to it in a reg'lar whirlwind of happy feelin's.

"The doc was so pleased with his splendid recovery 'at he tuk him to the hotel in his own kerridge, got Miss Slosby, who's on'y too glad of any chanst to git

her pore homesick old bones started back home, an' got 'em in the train.

"Time the train got to the Corners Slosby's fast asleep an' had ter be waked up an' put in the wagon, but he got home all right, an' Miss Slosby give out 'at he was home cured. An' he never really seemed to realize nothin' to the contrary for two or three days. Then he got Miss Slosby to boost him inter the wagon an' got down to the bank an' told Hawkins not to honour no note.

"But Hawkins couldn't help him none. 'We got the note all right,' says he, 'two days back,' says he. 'It's discounted by the Corn Exchange Bank,' says he. 'I s'posed it was all right when Miss Slosby give out 'at you was cured,' says he; 'but I read it over mighty careful, an' take my opinion, they got ye tighter'n a drum,' says he. 'You pay it, that's the cheap way out.'"

XVI

DR. GOODMAN RENEWS HIS SUIT

THE Sad Lady's visits to Latham Corners were always welcome. Hitherto they had been very brief, usually being connected with some business concerning Elsie's education. But this summer, for the first time since the original visit, she was obliged to come again for a prolonged stay and for treatment.

Greatly to Elsie's disappointment she insisted on staying at the hotel. To the old doctor she said that she was "all worn out." Events had occurred recently, she told him, which had sent her to the seventh heaven of anticipation, only to end in dark disappointment.

"That's mebbe so," commented the doctor. "I dunno s' much 'bout so many heavens. One's 'nuff for my cal'clations. An' it'd be lots better for ye, daughter, if ye'd keep a good, firm grip on the one, an' not go speckylatin' round' bout no other six, ye understan' me. They was one man on'y caught up into the third heaven an' he heard unspeakable things. What I'm goin' to try to give ye now, beside the oil, is some real rest."

"Yes, Doctor, but I've been resting. I haven't done anything or been anywhere for months."

"All right s' fur as it goes. But not real 'nuff. Too many heavens, ye understan' me. Here's the way I wants ye to rest. Mornin's ye'll git out with the young folks. Evenin's ye'll climb the Bluff, pick out the one spot f'm where the valley looks more beautiful, an' peaceful, an' quiet than any place 'at ye ever

seen or heer'n tell of; then ye'll set there all alone an' think how like to heaven.

"An' ye'll think 'at, arter all, when He chastens He shorely loves.

"An' ye'll remember the times He's ben merciful.

"An' ye'll remember 'at big as the world is, He made it an' He's able to keer for it, every little thing an' every big thing.

"An' ye'll bear in mind 'at He's allus ben lovin', an' ye don't know what good things He may have stored up for ye, but, arter all, He knows best.

"Then all the cares an' worries'll roll off f'm ye, an' then ye'll walk back in the quiet evenin' an' I'll put the oil in yore eyes, an' ye'll go to bed an' to sleep."

David and Elsie were very willing to perform their share in treating the Sad Lady by planning all manner of pleasant walks and drives to occupy the golden morning hours.

Doctor Goodman was not in this instance invited to assist in the treatment, for there had been only the faintest suspicion of the dreaded "tic." But although the doctor was in general most scrupulously careful about interfering with the treatment of another physician, he seemed inclined to make an exception of this case. It is a little questionable if he did not add to the Sad Lady's perplexities. Certainly he sometimes disturbed those quiet afternoons on the Bluff.

He sat at the feet of the Sad Lady one restful afternoon in a spot of ideal beauty, where the Bluff gave an unobstructed view of miles of pleasant valley, restful and quiet in the afternoon sun. To the casual observer they might well have passed for a young couple making hay in the shining of the sun.

Elsie would have been surprised that any one should consider her doctor father young. She knew, of course, that he was not old like Doc Williams; but he

had always been her father, he had always been grown up, he had always been a person of authority, and the maturity of his forty-two years was indelibly impressed. Nevertheless any old lady in the village could have told her that the doctor, with his handsome features, erect carriage, and attractive figure, was a fine young man and a good catch for any girl in the county.

The Sad Lady, however, five years the doctor's junior, was always a woman both beautiful and young in Elsie's eyes, and, indeed, both of the adjectives were fully warranted. In spite of whatever disproportionate share of sorrow had burdened her helpful career, the Sad Lady had lived her life without receiving the impress of age. Her beautiful auburn locks still held their depth of colour, her clear white skin remained firm and smooth, her eyes, since becoming rested, again showed the sparkle of vigour, and she held for those who knew her best a pleasant fund of keen humour, easily provoked in spite of her title of Sad Lady.

Elsie's training was always their safe, common ground, and they were recurring to it.

"She is not a finished product, Doctor. I would be sorry to think of her so. But she is quite an accomplished young lady, and fully able to take care of herself."

"And for this I am very grateful to you, my dear Mrs. Wilton," responded the doctor, warmly. "I cannot think of her as anything but a child, though. To me she is still a little one, who needs a mother's care," he added, with artful innocence.

"Elsie would thank you for that sentiment," laughed the Sad Lady.

"You know you agreed with me as to its truth," persisted the doctor.

"Six or seven years ago I did. Then she was a

hoyden girl. Now she is a young lady. Think of the young men who come to see her."

"There's nothing in that," said the doctor, hastily, showing a real alarm. "They're just schoolmates. Johnny Langston and David and the rest."

"Of course, I know there's nothing serious, not so very serious at least, just this very minute," quizzed the Sad Lady. "I don't suppose you will lose your bird at once, not immediately that is. But it won't be so very many years, and I've quite made up my mind that she shall go off with my blue-eyed David some day."

A little cloud crossed the face of the doctor. After all, she was his little girl, still.

"I'd rather not joke about such a possibility, Lady." (This was the children's mode of address, and for their more intimate conversations he borrowed it.) "I'm not sure that I'd like to think of David in that connection, anyway, much as I admire him. You see, if he follows the old doctor's wishes his career will be quite impossible—an educated man giving such treatment would be no more nor less than a quack. Then, too, his parentage is absolutely unknown, born in the low parts of Chicago it may be vile, and we Goodmans have always had a little special pride in our blue blood."

The little laugh with which he concluded was intended to offset the note of affectation, but did not really hide his air of preening his plumage.

"'Jarley is the delight of the Nobility and Gentry,'" quoted the Sad Lady, in gentle derision. "Hear the man talk about blue blood, and he a doctor! Blue blood is poor blood. Purified, oxygenated blood is red. That's the kind my David has in his arteries. And young men with red blood get what they want, Mister Doctor."

"We shall see; we shall see. Anyway, I agree with

your last proposition. The blood in my own vessels is red; so eventually, by your own admission, I shall get what I want."

The doctor was quick to see an opening.

"I thought perhaps you would get a new argument after a time, Doctor, dear. Elsie's innocent childishness has been frayed at the edges for some little time, now. It was too old to work. You needed to allow it to retire in favour of a new one."

"But it's an old one upon which I most rely, Lady. Old as the hills. It's the one with which I'm going to win you some day."

The Sad Lady's white skin flushed to a beautiful colour.

"Never mind," she said. "You agreed not to talk of it."

"I did," he broke in, impetuously. "But I didn't and couldn't agree not to think of it, nor agree not to let it burn in my heart and soul day after day, nor agree not to let it clamour for recognition at all crises, nor agree not to allow it to pervade all my visions, colour all my ambitions, temper all my desires, and be the only end to all my dreams."

The Sad Lady held out her hands deprecatingly.

"You know you are breaking into Doctor Williams' prescription, now. This could hardly be called rest, you know, Doctor."

"But I can give you rest, Lady, if only you will allow me. There is no one can do it as well. If you will only give your worries over to me I can carry them for you and you will soon forget them. Now, dear Lady, you have admitted that the legal obstacle has vanished. There is nothing in the way now. Trust yourself to me and I will make you happy. We are young people. The world is before us. Let us live our lives!"

"Doctor, I cannot, I cannot, and again I cannot!

How can I tell you of the maze of matters which bind me? How can I explain the possibility that this Goodman blue blood of which you speak with such just pride might even suffer pollution? What is my present breakdown but the tearing open of old wounds by recent happenings. A possibility was presented. A child—my child—might be yet living—might be found. We searched the records only to find evidence indisputable that he was dead. It was nothing but a heartless trick. It isn't the future that keeps me from coming to you, Doctor. It's the unhappy past—the ineradicable past that will not be blotted out."

The Sad Lady subsided into gentle crying. The doctor knew that his opportunity was gone for the present. But he had yet one thing to offer.

"Lady, one thing I want to ask. Is there by any possibility a money difficulty; would money help? I am not a rich man, but if fifty thousand——"

"No, my dear Doctor. It is like you to offer your all. But I have no need of money. My father, General Wilton, is, as you know, a very wealthy man, and I have, besides, an ample fortune of my own; more money than I need by far. I will tell you a secret while we are talking of money. I know how the old doctor is saving and planning for his new Inn. I have always wanted to help him in a really proportionate way for all the goodness he has shown to me. It happened, just as I was coming away, that a loan which I had made personally, amounting with the interest to nearly ten thousand dollars, was repaid to me. On the impulse of the moment I just brought it along for the old doctor, thinking what a pleasure it would be to give him such a sum which would probably enable him to begin his new Inn at once. Do you know the good old man absolutely refused to take it? Said he had craved the privilege of treating me as his own daughter, and couldn't even take a con-

tribution. I have it in my trunk in a little iron box, and hope yet to change his mind. But, you see, Doctor, it isn't anything that money can do that I need."

Yes, the doctor could see. And as his mind dwelt for a moment on the immense wealth that could offer ten thousand dollars as a slight contribution, with never a plan or a thought other than impulse, he saw another barrier between himself and the Sad Lady.

The sun was dropping down the western sky so that great stretches of the valley lay in shadow, now. The pleasant coolness of an early summer evening began to come upon them. Doctor Goodman helped the Sad Lady to her feet with a cheerful face, for he believed in the gospel of good cheer. And so, in spite of discouragement, he encouraged in himself also a cheerful heart, for he knew his only rival to be circumstance and felt that some day he would conquer.

In the quiet of the evening the handsome couple picked their way along the side of the Bluff, the doctor smoothing the Sad Lady's path, as he desired to do all through life, and were soon lost to view.

From his cramped post of observation in the bushes arose " Sent," stretched in immense satisfaction, patted his disordered clothing, and likewise departed.

XVII

THE SON OF GENTLEMAN GEORGE

LET there be no attempt to befuddle the astute reader, who has already guessed that "Sent" is identical with Goldielocks. The years since his previous visit to the old doctor had been parsimoniously lean for Goldie. Exiled from his favourite hunting grounds by a decree which, though distasteful, was none the less mandatory, he had failed to find a suitable niche to install his talents elsewhere. In a place where all things unusual are ascribed either to God or the devil he had been so unfortunate as to fail of recognition in the first class, his hypnotic exhibitions had promptly placed him under head number two, and his clairvoyance had merely added a triumphant confirmation to the minds of the simple natives.

A remembrance of the easy picking at Latham Corners had lingered in his mind throughout the years, and he had naturally turned to it as soon as his judgment allowed him to consider it safe to travel.

There were reasons why he would have been pleased to disguise himself by a separation from his distinguished and distinguishing poll. But this was impossible—he could no more play his part without it than a king without his crown.

And the playing of his part was as necessary to feed the inner man of Goldielocks as the inhalations of atmosphere which fed his circulatory apparatus and the ingestion of aliment which renewed his tissues. From all of these sources of nourishment, except the atmospheric, Goldie had been somewhat

starved for a long period and was hungry enough to be considered ravenous.

Add to this the fact that he was the victim of an aneurismal tumour (fortunately for him, one which produced little in the way of distressing symptoms), and it will be understood why the aforesaid Goldie was especially desirous to make a good stake which would enable him to live the remainder of his life in his own pleasing way, free from the cares and anxieties attendant upon the daily effort to provide a living.

David's homecoming was decidedly disturbing to the professor. It was very soon evident to him that the boy was not likely to share in the old doctor's ready belief and admiration for his powers. He feared that he might even become inquisitive as to his past and so make things unpleasant. At present the professor was making a laudable effort to forget his past. He was willing to let bygones be bygones, and desired only that others be like-minded. One reason why he refused to go to the village was because he had learned that the *Tribune* man was there. David mostly assumed toward him an attitude of frigid neutrality, and this really pleased him very well. He needed no telepathy to know that the boy disliked and distrusted him, for having preyed on human nature all his life, he was an apt reader of its signs.

As the days went by and David made no disturbing motions, the professor grew into a state of greater confidence. Then he made a great mistake—just such a mistake as a man of deceit readily makes in expecting others to see things from his own standards, or absence of standards. He could not believe that David, with his bright mind and college training, really believed in the divine nature of the healing oil and its supply. He concluded that the boy—like himself—was playing a part in order to get what advantage he

could from his adopted father. This being so, why not show him how collaboration would be of mutual profit.

David, by an unusual inspiration, was fortunate enough to perceive his designs, and to conceive the idea that he could best get at the real purpose of the man by leading him on.

"When the new Inn's built the old man'll get higher prices, I suppose. He'll make a pot o' money then, sure," said "Sent" one day as an opener.

"I think he makes all the money he wants, now," said David, curtly; for try as he would, he could not bring himself to a ready acquiescence in the scoundrel's slurs.

"He may think he does, but he can use more, you can use more, and, if you'll excuse my making mention of it, I can use more. None of us ever get too much of that commodity."

"I don't see how you have anything to do with it. I don't want any more. And the doctor doesn't, excepting enough to build the Inn."

"Saving everything up for that now, isn't he? Well, it's a grand idea. I think a lot of the old doctor, and as soon as he'll let me, I'll show him how he can get a heap more out of people, with half the trouble."

"I hope you'll begin to show him soon," said David. "He ought to know."

He could think of no quicker way for "Sent" to bring about his own exposure. He would be glad to hasten it.

"For one thing he could do a 'follow up' business with these people. When they leave for their homes he could mail the oil to 'em. The way they come and go he'd need a pipe-line to keep up the supply before long."

David looked sharp at the man.

"Suppose the supply didn't hold?" he asked.

It had not occurred to him, so rooted was his own faith, that even this man discredited the divine supply.

"Sent" gave a short laugh.

"I guess Doc's smart enough to see that there's always enough for his needs."

"Why, you abominable liar!" David blazed out, his cunning exploded. "You know he hasn't anything to do with it. He wouldn't add a drop to save his soul."

"No, I guess not." The professor gave an admirable chuckle. If this boy really believed such stuff he could enlighten him. "I guess he wouldn't do a thing. Not at all! You believe that, all the years you've lived here? I found them out the second day I was here. That's Dummy's job. What do you reckon he keeps Dummy for?"

Swift to the point of the professor's chin sprang David's knuckled fist at this calumnious intimation.

The man collapsed at the impact. As he fell the great mop of hair fell back from his brow, and David saw a long, deep scar just at the hairline—the relic of the realistic attempt of a swindled plainsman to take scalp for scalp.

And now David's long-baffled memory responded.

"Now I know you, Professor!" cried the boy, exultantly. "That scar's what I needed to remind me. I can see your sign swinging with its long finger, from that dirty house in Chicago right now. 'Professor Clare, Clairvoyant.' I can remember how we chased after you because of your hair. 'Goldielocks' they used to call you. Yes, I know you now, Professor."

The professor had stumbled to his feet and was steadying himself by the door of the little house. He was palpably ill, his face grey with pain and shock, a clammy sweat on his skin.

David's exultation changed to anxiety. He helped him in and laid him on the bed.

"I was afraid you'd done for me, boy," he gasped, after a brief rest. "It would have been the worst trick you ever played yourself, for I have a fortune for you."

The blow had evidently deranged the rascal's mentality.

David grew more and more anxious.

"Never mind now, Professor," he cried, in a kindlier voice and with kindlier feeling than he had ever shown the man. "You lie still while I run to the house and get the doctor."

"No. He can't do anything. I guess I'm all right this time, anyway. But you might easily have killed me. I've got a blood tumour they call an aneurism. I've been warned against any sudden shock or exertion which might cause it to break, and I thought sure you'd done it. But I mean what I say, boy. I've got a fortune for you and me."

"Does your head feel all right?" asked David, still anxious.

"Think I'm rattled, don't you? No, I know what I'm saying. Soon as you speak about being in Chicago I know who you are. You're the little red-headed kid that belonged to Gentleman George. I remember I saw you in the village when I called on the doctor years ago. There was nothing in it then, and I forgot it. You've grown up and changed so, I didn't know till you spoke about Chicago what a piece of luck there was coming to both of us."

"You're mistaken," insisted David. "I've nothing to do with any Gentleman George. It's all a mistake."

"Wait till I tell you, boy, and you won't be so ready to talk about mistake. Listen. There's a hundred thousand dollars in it. Gentleman George died in the

penitentiary a few months ago. He left a will giving ten thousand of this money to the man who finds you. The rest is all yours."

"You are mistaken. I'm no kin of any one who died in the penitentiary. I'm not the one."

"Yes, you are, and I can prove it. Not a word to any one, now. Here's the doctor coming. Not a word even to him. Time enough when everything's proved up. Till then, be still as death."

David slipped out of the back door in a storm of mixed feelings. "Sent" raised himself into a chair, and by the time the old doctor reached the little house, showed slight trace of excitement.

"Ye don't look right well to-day, friend," said the doctor in kindly salutation.

"I don't feel as well as I might, Doctor. I believe I'll come up to the house and have you give me a treatment."

The treatment over "Sent" did a very unusual thing. He reached into his pocket and handed the doctor a bill of a rather large denomination.

"Not from you, friend," said the old man, shaking his head.

"Yes, Doctor. It isn't for you or me to say. The Spirit moves me to offer this, and I feel that it should go with the money you are laying by for the new Inn."

It was not for the old doctor to gainsay the workings of the Spirit. He took the money, and to the disappointment of the giver, went with it into his bedroom. "Sent" tiptoed carefully to the door and applied his eye to the crack.

Like many another contributor to works of a charitable or religious character, he was extremely anxious to be informed as to the exact disposition of his money.

XVIII

DAVID REFUTES THE IMPUTATION

DAVID received the professor's disclosure in a whirl of sensations.

At first he thought of it simply as an emanation of an unbalanced mind, and was chiefly concerned lest his blow had caused damage beyond repair. Then as he was forced to recognize "Sent's" sanity, he began to have serious doubts of his own. All this time his memory was reproducing pictures of the long forgotten days of his childhood, and gradually things took on a more rational semblance.

David's training had not been such as to make the sudden acquisition of a fortune a great temptation. The old doctor had always taught him that money as an object or ambition was to be despised. In spite of this there had never been any lack of money. Everything he wanted had always been supplied, and there was no indication of future want. Money was not without its charm, but reared as he had been it had no positive allurement. Had a fortune come without handicap he would have felt a proper elation. But this—the money of a criminal, a man whose life had ended as he paid the undisputed price of crime—this money which sought to link him with a felon—this had no allurement.

Allurement! Rather he had never been born than owe his birth to a man whose life was to prey upon the lives of others.

Fortune! Could there, in all the world, be greater misfortune than a chain which sought to bind his past—and not alone his past but his future—with

such a criminal. But as he turned the situation over and over in his mind the recollection of the old days brought something which he eagerly grasped for relief.

It was his one recollection of Gentleman George. A hot summer day, a stuffy, quiet house, a few solemn people, a minister, a little coffin, and a tall man with a handsome though pallid face and close-cropped head looking into it. The man and he were the chief mourners, and this was the funeral of his little playmate—the boy who had always lived with him and Mother Jones—the boy who had resembled him enough to be supposed his twin—the boy he had played with and fought with and, with his own shocked eyes, seen stricken to earth by the passing cable car.

And as he thought so earnestly of the scene, he remembered the sturdy man who had always kept so close to the other chief mourner, and he remembered the undertaker—who was a good friend of his—telling him afterwards in tones of pride that the man—the mourner—was Gentleman George. He remembered the story, as he thought. Gentleman George had done something special. So they had allowed him to come from the penitentiary under charge of a deputy-warden to this funeral. And this was the funeral of his little boy!

Now he understood the professor's mistake—he had mistaken him for his playmate. A great thankfulness and immeasurable relief filled his being. He stretched his body and shook his shoulders as if casting off a great weight.

He had wandered about all the afternoon with his problem, and it was growing late. His first impulse was to find "Sent" and tell him of his mistake. But on second thought he saw that the most important thing, now that he had the problem solved, was to drag the professor away from the old doctor before he committed any irreparable damage.

The exposure of the scoundrel to the doctor was a harder matter than he anticipated.

"I've found out about your guest in the little house, Dad," he began, as soon as opportunity came.

"You've found out 'at he's a mighty clever man, Davy?"

"Yes, clever enough. But more than that, I've found that he's a great rascal."

"Now, Davy, boy! Easy now. Go easy. I know 'at ye've disliked him, but don't call names like that. Wunst ye've said a bad thing 'bout a man ye c'n never call it back. Ye c'n tell me what ye've foun', but don't pass no sentence, boy."

David told him the whole story, together with his subsequent recollection and reflections. The old man drew his chair close to him and put his arm around his shoulders in loving sympathy.

"I'm glad ye got it figgered out, Davy, boy. Not, mind ye, that it'd make any real difference if ye was the man's son, ye understan' me. Real difference, I say. Course it'd make a difference in what people'd say, but 'twouldn't make no difference in you, son. You're my honest, strong man, an' His man whatever comes."

"I know it, Dad. But for other people's sakes and my own, too, I'm glad it isn't so."

"Now about the perfessor. I dunno 'at anythin' you say makes him a rascal, which I think was the name ye was applyin'. Fact is, it ruther bears him out. Right in the heart of Chicago, jest as he says. A perfessor! That shows he's a great man. You was so little he might hev ben usin' his healin' spring every day an' you not know it. See, boy! A perfessor, right f'm the heart of Chicago! Looks like his story 'at he tells ain't so fur off. An' a sick man, too, jes' as he said he was. Let's not give a sick man the wust end of it, Davy, boy, ye understan' me."

David saw that there was no use in continuing the argument.

"Let him go, Dad," he agreed. "But there's one thing I want you to do. It's a big thing, but I can't be easy till it's done. I want to prove my story. I want to do it right away. I believe I know just how to reach that undertaker. I want you to take the early morning train with me to Chicago, go to that undertaker and get the proofs I need, and get this thing settled. If we don't, the professor will be doing everything he can to get that ten thousand dollars, and telling every one I am the son of Gentleman George."

The old man looked doubtful.

"Son, I never done sech a thing in my life," he said.

"I know it, Dad. But just this once, for me! I can remember enough of the city to look after you."

"Davy, boy, ye've had a heavy blow an' I mus' help all I kin. I'll do it, boy. I'll tell yore Aunt Mercy 'at if any one needs me she c'n let the perfessor—I like that better'n 'Sent'—treat 'em like he has afore. An' so 'at she won't worry we won't tell her nothin' 'bout where we're goin' ner nothin' till it's all over."

"And we mustn't tell the professor either, Dad. We'll be gone before daybreak and back on the four o'clock train in the afternoon, and I'll have this mess all cleared up. Say, but I'll be happy."

David found the return to the hurry and bustle of Chicago, after his many years of absence, exciting and exhilarating beyond measure. To his surprise the old doctor took it very calmly and was quite self-possessed.

"Dad, you act as if you came here every day," he shouted in the confusion of the elevated station.

"It don't trouble me none, Davy, boy," answered the old man, calmly. "It's all His. These is great wonders, but He made 'em. These hustlin' bustlin'

folks is His people. If I don't know what to do some on 'em'll tell me if I waits long enough. This don't trouble me none."

The years had wrought many changes in the progressive city, but to David's gratification the place where he had been brought up had been little touched by them, and he was able to find the friendly undertaker without trouble.

Of course he had grown out of all recognition, but once introduced he had no trouble in bringing himself to the undertaker's recollection.

"Remember the little chap you used to play with? I don't get no chance to forget him, not lately, anyway, by no means. Blamed if they ain't some one asking after him ever since Gentleman George popped off. As a general thing I don't mind the trouble a stiff makes for me, 'cause that's the way I make my livin'. But I didn't get nothing out of George's layout, and if I'd sold 'em the whole job, I couldn't have made more'n enough on it to pay me for all the questions I've had to answer."

"What's put you to so much trouble?" asked David.

"You see, Gentleman George was rich. It was mostly money left him after he was sent up. He made a will. Nobody knows why he done such a freak, but he left it all to his son, and ten thousand to the man as found him. That put lots of professionals and amatoors looking for that ten thousand. Sooner or later they all find that George was let out of the pen a few years back, special for the funeral of his boy. Then they comes to me to confirm it, and I gives 'em the proof.

"I didn't know no more'n the rest of 'em why he done it until a few months ago some parties came as represented his widder. They was hunting the boy, not the money. One of 'em told me that George had

always fooled them into thinking the boy had died when they stole him away from his mother as a little baby.

"'It's a heartless trick, and just like George to make such a will,' he says. 'He knew we'd hear of it, and so this way he first raises the woman's hopes way up by intimating that the boy's still alive, and then harrers up her feelings by letting her know that the youngster did live years after she had given him up for dead, but only lets her find it out to blast it all by the sure knowledge of his death. Just like George.'

"I told him George had his good points. How he acted so nice at the little chap's funeral and paid cash for the very best job I had in the house for him. But he went away feeling sore and I don't blame him. But he made a thorough investigation, he did. He had me describe every little thing about the child, but when I told about his birthmark he said, 'That's enough. If he had that mark he was the kid all right. Nobody outside George's family ever had that.'"

"Did he say anything about there being possibly another child?"

"Since he come from the widder I asked about that, but he said she had only one, and this one fitted the description all through—age, birthmark, and everything. I guess there's no mistake."

David did not feel called upon to tell him of the professor's mistake, but since the doctor was present, he asked, for his benefit, if the man had ever operated a spring of healing oil.

"That faker!" exclaimed the undertaker, at mention of his name. "Things got too warm for him around here years ago. He operated 'most every fake that anybody ever thought of in his time, and there may have been a oil spring in it, but the last thing he done here they found a young woman in

his rooms who'd been missing for weeks, and the professor made a hasty disappearance."

"Was the young woman hurt?" asked the old doctor, anxiously.

"No, she was dead," replied the undertaker, with a little laugh at his delicate touch of humour.

"Davy, let's git sturted back," urged the doctor. "I don't want that serpent on the place another minute. Thanks be to God, my people are in His hands, but I don't feel right at leavin' 'em any chanct to come in contact with that snake. Let's us hurry back."

XIX

EXEUNT GOLDIELOCKS AND DUMMY

THE professor was a man of catholic tastes and interests. He was interested in everything. He had always been so. It was his mode of living and his means of livelihood. Nothing was too great nor too small for his interest.

Just now, at Latham Corners, his especial interest lay in two or three matters of a financial character. In the first place, he was concerned about the money the old doctor had been laying aside for years for his new Inn. He feared that the old man, with his trustful disposition, was hardly a fit person to be the trustee of so large a financial interest. He felt sure that he could suggest an improvement.

In the second place, he was interested in the little reward of ten thousand dollars which would be his for the identification of the heir of Gentleman George. The fact that this reward would be money earned honestly raised no obstacle to his interest, for to him money was money and he cared little whether or no it came through the usual channels of his revenue.

The third matter he had stumbled upon a few days ago, when he had taken the trouble to do a little eavesdropping. It was the Sad Lady and her fortunes, or rather fortune. If there was another ten thousand to go with the Inn money he hoped the contribution would be properly placed before he found it necessary to take the whole thing under his own jurisdiction.

While perfectly willing that his past should be ignored the professor felt a genuine interest in his

future. For this it was his intention to make provision and he felt that his prospects were brighter than they had been since that day so many years ago when, his education completed, he had left college to make the world his dominion and the people in it his vassals. It was true that he had an aneurism, but it gave him remarkably little trouble, and in common with the great majority, he cherished the delusion that while other people were mortal he would live, if not forever, at least indefinitely.

So he felt very happy that pleasant morning, and was not at all ill-pleased to learn that Doc had been called away and he was to be in full charge. It suited him admirably, for there was a thing or two he wished to locate more definitely in the bedroom where he had seen the doctor bestow his offering. The doctor had been receiving these contributions from the public for years. The interests of the public demanded an audit.

In the course of the morning he located the money—counted it—found it even more than the offered reward—fingered it—fondled it—and heroically restored it to its hiding-place. The time was not fully ripe, but it was an awful temptation. That a still greater temptation should follow he would have deemed impossible.

The Sad Lady had spent her hour with Nature, and started home rather early, with a dread suspicion that she was again feeling the approach of the dreaded tic douloureux. Doctor Goodman, she knew was attending a medical meeting, but at least she could stop at the house and have the old doctor administer the oil—it would surely help.

The professor, standing at the window, saw her approach. Often had he watched her from a distance, coveting her beauty without hope of gratification.

She was evidently coming to the house, probably for treatment. Could it be that Fate intended to de-

liver her right into his eager hands? Surely, his star of fortune was high in the heavens, his tide was at its flood.

He watched the lady in her delicate beauty until she passed from his view as she went to the rear of the house to see Aunt Mercy.

"Doc's away," announced Aunt Mercy. "But the stranger he calls 'Sent,' he'll tend to ye."

"Oh, no. I wouldn't care for treatment from any one but Doctor. If he's not here, I'll just go on to the hotel."

"Better not," insisted Aunt Mercy. "This stranger's a powerful man with the ile. He's done things even Doc couldn't, ef I do hate ter say it. Akshully cured old Katy."

As it happened, the Sad Lady knew all about Katy and was duly impressed.

"You really say he has cured Katy!" she exclaimed. "I believe I will see him if you think best."

She was feeling a twinge of pain even as she spoke.

"I shorely do," affirmed Aunt Mercy; and she herself led her lamb into the presence of the wolf and left her there defenceless, for it was well understood that patients must not suffer the distraction of a third person.

Ah, but the avaricious, sordid heart leaped in exultation as the beautiful woman was left to his manipulations. He shivered with the keen zest of his anticipation. Not in years had such opportunities thrilled his pulses. Now he must use all his cunning and his most astute diplomacy to secure the conditions he desired. An old and practised follower of the hypnotic art, he had no delusions as to the extent of his powers. Well he knew that it was not a simple matter of the magic wave of the hand—that to induce required con-

ditions he must have the fixed and voluntary attention of his subject.

"It is the lady whom the doctor treated for 'tic,' is it not?" he asked.

The lady assented.

"My way of administering the oil differs somewhat from the doctor's. I think in a case of a nerve trouble such as yours I can give much quicker relief, if you will give me the fixed attention of the muscles and nerves of the eye."

"I will do the best I can, Doctor."

"Very well!" He held up his sparkling bottle. "Now, fix the eyes so, and gaze steadily at the oil in this small bottle. I will administer it at the proper time."

Steadily she gazed, for she was a firm believer in doing her part.

He, on his part, kept up a monotonous string of remarks.

"Do not mind a little drowsiness. Yes, you feel it, do you not? Yes, you are getting more drowsy, but that is part of the cure. Yes, you are going to sleep, but you will wake up well. Sleep is nature's healing. Do not resist it. Sleep brings relief from pain. It is overpowering. You will close your eyes firmly now. You cannot open them. Sleep! Sleep! Sleep! You are asleep!"

The long sinewy fingers descend upon the heavy lids—the quiet figure in the chair heeds them not—the Sad Lady is asleep.

Who shall describe the fiendish gleam of satisfaction that covers the face of the professor, or who pen words to portray the gloating exultation of his soul?

She is ready for suggestion. How will she accept it?

"You may open your eyes, now," in a matter-of-fact voice.

The Sad Lady opens her eyes.

"There is no more pain?"

"No, it has disappeared," with a gracious smile.

"It will never trouble you again. It is no longer possible for the nerve to exhibit pain."

"I feel sure of it, Doctor."

A sudden thought comes to the professor. Aunt Mercy is in the kitchen. He does not want her here, but he knows how she can be made very useful.

"You want Aunt Mercy to bring something from your room at the hotel," he suggests.

"Yes, I believe I do."

"A little iron box from your trunk, which you intended for the old doctor, is it not?"

"Yes, I remember now."

"Suppose you step to the kitchen and tell her. Then come back and I will continue the treatment."

It is done. The house is deserted but for themselves. She is in his hands until Aunt Mercy returns. An hour! As well a thousand years! Then as the climax, the great money prize will be handed to him—placed deliberately in his hands—he will add to it the hoard from the doctor's room which is his for the taking, and once more Professor Clare will effect a sudden and complete disappearance. Ye gods of fortune, what an opportunity!

"Compose yourself once more so that I may give the treatment," he suggests.

Well does the crafty master of the art know that he must not offer suggestion counter to her fixed principles of life.

"Now, lie on the lounge to rest. Now sleep!" This time it is a command.

She is asleep. She lies calmly on the old lounge, the delicate face wreathed in its glory of hair, the

pink lips together, the bosom moving gently as in natural sleep. And is there no pity in the heart of this man who profanes her with his gaze?

Pity! Not pity from him. Perhaps the sentiment was known to him long, long ago, before the years—the brutalizing, vicious years—the years of shutting out all human instinct and seeing human kind only as prey—had seared close every spring of gentle feeling.

Pity! Not from this incarnation of evil in whom sin and crime excite no feelings of disquietude save in reference to their penalties.

Pity! Is there no other who will pity—none who can yet extend the hand of mercy?

Surely, as a father pitieth his children even so the Lord is merciful to them that fear Him. And among these the Sad Lady is safely numbered. Waste no pity on the Sad Lady.

The professor lifts his head with a start of apprehension. What noise is that? The doctor away, David away, Aunt Mercy disposed of; who can be about the place?

Ah, the Dummy! He had forgotten. He will soon dispose of that incubus, and he steps out to the kitchen.

But, for once, it happens that Dummy has entered at the front door. He gently pushes open the door of the doctor's room, and steps inside in the noiseless way of his kind, just as the professor leaves.

A look of wondering awe crosses his face as he sees the Sad Lady lying there so fair and quiet in sleep. He tiptoes across the room and into the kitchen.

The professor has just stepped outside the kitchen door to continue his search. Dummy follows him.

"Oh, here you are," calls the professor, enraged by the delay. "You hustle down to the station and

get a box that came for me by express. Here's a dollar for you. Now, go quick."

It is necessary to speak slowly and distinctly to reach Dummy's understanding by the lip-reading route, which only adds to the professor's rage. Time is precious. Aunt Mercy will be returning. Any number of things may happen.

Dummy takes the coin, but seems uncertain about going. The professor steps toward the kitchen. Dummy bars the door, shaking his head. In a second he is facing the threatening cylinder of the professor's persuader.

"Now, will you go?" he roars.

Who knows what impulse stirred the phlegmatic Dummy to his act of heroism? Enough that the Sad Lady had always been kind to him. Doubled compactly, his powerful body shot itself at his opponent and hurled him to the ground, but not in time to inhibit the practised finger in its pull upon the trigger. Dummy scarce gripped the throat at which he leaped. The body which bore the professor to the ground made no recovery, but lay inanimate, a thing of death.

A frothing team, drawing a light wagon, rushed over the hill just as the shot was fired.

David and the old doctor from Chicago, Doctor Goodman from his medical meeting, and the newspaper man from a visit, had all returned on the four o'clock train. Near the station they met Aunt Mercy, who told of her errand. David made a rush for the nearest team, and the others, seeing the trouble in the face of the doctor, followed without question.

They picked Dummy up, while David cried accusingly to the professor: "You did this, you murderer!"

"Yes, but he got me, too!" gasped the professor.

It was true.

It was Dummy's blood that stained his clothing. but internally a wasting stream, invisible save to the

eye omnipotent, was draining his life supply, blanching his features, and causing the sweat of death to stand upon his skin. Dummy's onset had ruptured the aneurism!

Doctor Goodman gave his attention at once.

"It's no good," he told the professor. "It probably dissected along the outer coat of the vessel, or you would have gone out like a puff of flame. But it can only be a very short time. If you have anything to say or any message to send, remember your time is brief."

The professor beckoned to the newspaper man.

"Go away, the rest of you. I have something to say to the *Tribune* man. He did me a good turn once, and what I have is for him."

The newspaper man recognized Goldielocks and recalled the occasion on which he might have been supposed to do him service. But as he bent low his head to catch the straining words he had no thought that the dying adventurer had anything to tell him that would pay for his "good turn."

The two doctors went anxiously into the house.

The Sad Lady sat on the lounge—her hands to her head—bewilderment in her eyes.

"Whatever is the matter, Doctor? I came here a while ago, and that man who treats your cases was here, and while he was talking to me I seemed to go into a sleep or a faint. Just now I seemed to waken by hearing a shot. What can it be?"

"Nothin' to trouble ye, daughter. Ye ain't feelin' good, an Doc Goodman's got a rig out here. He's goin' to put ye in an' take ye home."

As she got ready Doctor Goodman drew the old man aside.

"She need never know," he whispered. "The rascal couldn't possibly have injured her without her knowledge. Hypnotic suggestion cannot overcome the

individuality of the subject. We will never tell her."

Being county coroner, Doctor Goodman was able to hasten the necessary legal formalities attendant upon the tragedy. Then they gave Dummy rest in the spot most hallowed of all the earth to him—the little plot of green which lay at the sunny southern exposure of the house by the side of the road. And they knew that "the little chamber on the wall" was justified, for Dummy had indeed been a messenger of God.

XX

THE NEWSPAPER MAN GOES SWIMMING

THE newspaper man, having been expressly preferred by the professor, it seemed only proper that he should be the one to escort the body to Chicago, and make such arrangements for interment as were allowable.

He was away several days. It was a hot day in August when he returned, and David's first knowledge of his arrival was when he appeared at the house and asked him to go swimming.

"Sure thing," responded David. "Makes me feel all grown up to have real men come round to go swimming with me. Let's go by and get Johnny Langston, too, or he'll raise a howl. Miserable trip you must have had?"

"I'm glad to get it over, Dave. Want to go down to the coolest place on earth and wash it all off. We ought to have got the professor to Chicago before that aneurism broke. There was a thousand dollars' reward for him alive, but it didn't apply dead."

"I'm only too glad to get rid of him, dead or alive," declared David. "But it would have been fine for you to get a little something for your trouble."

"I expect to do that, all right. The court was kind enough to appoint me administrator. It will give me a day in Chicago once in a while for a few months, and a nice fee when everything is cleared up. You see, it turns out that the professor had a tidy bit of property. The reason he felt so poor was because it was all in real estate, and he didn't dare show himself to get the income or dispose of it."

"I suppose there's lots of folks willing to claim it?"

"Lots of 'em. People aren't all as touchy as you about taking money left by a criminal. I'd have taken it."

David shook his head.

"It wasn't mine, anyway, and even if it had been I couldn't take such money."

"Suppose it wasn't criminal money, Dave? I looked things up a little while I was in the city, and I made a discovery about the money. It was honest money. Gentleman George came of a wealthy family, and it was money that was left to him after he was sent up. Wouldn't that make a difference."

"Oh, I don't know," David cried impatiently. "What's the good of fussing about it, anyway? You know we explained to you how we proved that I had nothing to do with it, anyway, that the one it belonged to was the little chap who died."

"But answer me this," persisted the newspaper man. "Just for the sake of argument, now. A hundred thousand dollars is a lot of money; enough to make a man entirely independent, free to do as he pleases his whole life long. Now, supposing, just for the argument, that you could be proven the heir, wouldn't you be willing, now you know the money bears no taint of crime? Wouldn't that make a difference?"

"Not if it were a hundred million," was the emphatic reply. "Not if it were a hundred billion, if such a sum is possible. I wouldn't willingly know myself to carry a drop of the blood of such a scoundrel in my veins for all the wealth of the world."

The newspaper man smiled in mild cynicism.

"Don't be too emphatic, boy. You may live to be old enough to raise a family and be so unfortunate as to have to do it on short rations. Then you'll laugh at the idea. Here's Johnny. Shove over a little."

"Thought we were going swimming, Dave?" was Johnny's greeting.

"We are," answered Dave. "Mr. Holmes is going with us."

Johnny, who was on the same jovial terms with the newspaper man as with all the other inhabitants of Latham Corners, drew in his breath in a deep, impudent whistle.

"What's so surprising?" asked the newspaper man. "Can't I go?"

"Sure, Mr. Holmes, we're glad to have you. But I didn't suppose you ever did such a thing. Ain't you profaning all the traditions of the newspaper business? You'll be pretty near sure to get wet, you know."

"And why not?"

"No reason at all, if you want to. But you've been here as long as Dave, and Latham Corners has no previous bathing record against you. Father has often said no editor in the state commands such dry, caustic humour, and we all supposed that was how you kept it dry."

"Johnny, you are impudent to my company," warned David. "Keep quiet!"

As his admonition was accompanied by an elbow jab which knocked Johnny over the back of the seat into the wagon-bed behind, it was temporarily respected.

But no one could keep Johnny Langston quiet for longer than temporarily.

"You know, Mr. Holmes," he remarked, "you have to be able to swim where we go. Not," he added, "that a newspaper man ever gets out of his depth. But I hope you can swim."

"I can swim a little, Johnny. I used to know how, and seven years isn't such a terribly long time to be out of the water."

"Well, we'll treat you right, Mr. Holmes. Maybe

you can teach Dave a few things. He's very slow in the water."

"I'll be glad to teach what I know, Johnny. I don't suppose it would be possible to teach you anything, would it?"

"Now, that's some of your dry humour, Mr. Holmes. And it's never going to be dry any more. Just wait till we get you in once. Here we are! Last man in's a fool!"

But Johnny lingered just a moment laying his nice summer clothes in an orderly pile, and even as he rose a slender white shape flew past, with David close at heels, and to his amazed vision came a picture of the despised newspaper man going off the spring-board in a graceful double flip which even David only decently imitated.

Johnny stood at the end of the teetering spring-board and gazed down at the two bobbing heads.

"I certainly am," he admitted. "Last man in's a fool, and that's me. I didn't suppose anything that came out of Chicago could perform like that. Come up and show me how you do it."

The things the newspaper man showed them in aquatic performances that afternoon were wonderful.

"And to stay away from the water seven years when he can do all that!" murmured the surprised Johnny.

The boys faithfully attempted every feat, some with fair success, others with the heavy splash of failure. Their attempts ended when David, trying a back-action somersault, struck his head against the end of the spring-board and went heavily down. Johnny and the newspaper man were both in the water, quick as a flash, to his assistance. But he was not severely stunned, and as they reached the bank together it was a little doubtful who was really getting most assistance.

The newspaper man examined David's scalp, but found no contusions.

"No need to worry," Johnny assured him. "No harm coming to little Davy so long as he lights on that end. Hope he hasn't spoiled our spring-board."

"What's this red place between the shoulders?" asked the newspaper man. "Must have scraped as you went down."

David shook his head. "That's my identification mark," he explained. "Always had it. Born with it. Looks like a letter S, doesn't it?"

"Stands for 'Sweetness,'" added Johnny. "They forgot to take the label off the package when they delivered it."

"I'm mighty grateful to you for coming after me, Mr. Holmes," said Dave.

"Don't mention it, Dave. I don't know that you needed much help, and yet I feel, to-day, a good deal nearer being square with you and the doctor for the way you helped me out years ago."

"Bet he thinks he saved your valuable life, Dave," grinned Johnny. "We'll forgive you, Mr. Holmes, if you'll come back every day and give us a chance to get even with you."

But Johnny was too simple to read the devious thoughts and intricacies of such a mind. The newspaper man had deeper purposes than swimming. He had seen what he desired to see, and another seven years might pass before the performance of his ablutions took him further than the little 2 x 5 enamelled tub enclosed in the lean-to shed, which the college-bred wife had adapted as a bathroom.

They were driving home in boyish glee, the newspaper man for once as young as any, when passing a little cottage, David saw the doctor's buggy at the hitching-post.

"Let me out, fellows," he called. "There's Belle. I must wait and ride home with Dad."

David's devotion to his foster-father was as keen as in the days of early boyhood.

"Doc, he's outside," said a woman at the door. "Said he was goin' out to git a little help."

David stepped quietly to the rear of the premises. From past experience he knew that he would find him in some quiet spot withdrawn from the traffic of the house. Soon he heard his voice from behind a straw-stack. He was praying.

"Lord, let not this pore woman suffer fer an old man' ign'rance. Her cries goes up to thee, Almighty Father. Thou knowest her agony an' thou knowest the agony of thy unworthy servant at thy feet. Thou knowest, Lord, how thy servant Doc Goodman is too fur off to git here, an' they's nobuddy else in these parts, Lord. Oh, extend thy mighty arm, Lord, make the sufferin's of this pore woman to cease—bring this little new atom into its place with thy people, for I've done my best, Lord, an' it's thy job."

David hid behind the barn as the old man went up to the house. He might have a long wait, but he was glad he had stopped, for he knew how wearing on the doctor were these trying times, and how acceptable would be his fellowship on the journey home.

After all, he did not have long to wait. It was scarcely an hour before he saw the doctor stepping out toward the buggy, and as he hastened toward the house he heard the lusty cry of a vigorous child, protesting against its removal from a warm nest into a cold world.

"I shorely am glad to see ye, Davy!" exclaimed the old man. "I declare, I'm putty nigh tuckered. Take the lines, boy, an' I'll jes' set back comf'ble an' tell ye what a comfort it'll be when my big chap gits able to help, ye understan' me.

"These is the times 'at makes me want the eddication, Davy. Times like these I thinks the old man

ain't much good, noways, an' mebbe folks'd be better off if I never tried to do nothin' for 'em, an' they had to call on Doc Goodman for everythin'.

"Then I thinks, Doc Goodman cain't go more'n about so fur, s'pose they couldn't git him when he's needed? Cain't allus myself; couldn't this arternoon. What's they goin' to do. 'Tain't every doctor as'll suit my pore folks. Mighty few doctors but what's good men, but some of 'em has such unfortinit ways, ye understan' me.

"Doc Smith, now, he's a grand man mos' ways, but I'd be feared of him for my people. Ye see, Doc, he allus fears the wust. Patient comes in an' says, 'I ain't feelin' jest right, Doc. Ain't ben able to eat more'n 'bout three meals a day for some time. Don't want to git up in the mornin' till I smell breakfus' cookin'. An' as to work—me an' work has ben at outs for quite a whiles. Whut's matter?'

"Now, if 'twas Doc Goodman, he'd say: 'Ye got too many clinkers in yore grate, young feller. No good heapin' on more coal to smother the flame, jes' finish it, ye understan' me. Fust thing is to break a way through. Hold up on the fuel a bit. Let lots o' fresh air in. Then a little stuff 'at burns easy, an' see her flare. Fix ye up in no time.'

But Doc Smith, he knows how many dangerous bugs they is all aroun' in the atmosphere, seekin' who they may devour, an' he's boun' 'cordin' to his convictions to tell the man jes' what danger he's in. He looks him over an' then he shakes his head, solemn like, an' he says right short, 'Threatened with typhoid fever,' he says. 'Go home, take this med'sin, an' go to bed,' he says. 'I'll come see ye in the mornin',' he says.

"Well, some on 'em c'n stand both the med'sin an' the forecast an' not be so awful much wuss off. But the mos' of 'em, arter sheddin' gloom all over the fambly, goes to bed an' tosses aroun' all night, won-

derin' if they'll have it very bad, an' thinkin' of how many people it carried off last year.

" Time Doc gits there, chances is if they was any bugs o' that kind anywheres in the feller's neighbourhood they've took their opportunity an' got their nest all built in a fav'rite spot an' a good start toward a fambly, already. Then Doc looks arter him, an' Providence bein' kind, he mebbe gits through, an' proves 'at Doc is a great man. If Providence has a disp'nsation an' he goes home to glory instead, ever'buddy knows 'at Doc done his best, for he told him fust thing how dangerous he was. On t'other hand, if they really ain't no bugs anywheres aroun' to git sturted to work, or the feller ain't got 'nough 'magination to let 'em git sturted, it jes' proves 'at Doc saved him f'm a bad spell o' typhoid. So, Doc gits 'em a-comin' an' a-goin', ye understan' me.

" Well, s'posin' they gits Doc Jones instid. I couldn't hardly trust 'em with Jones. Years ago when Jones was young, a man 'at had a fatty tumour in a place 'at was mighty inconvenient, ye understan' me, he jes' plumb insisted 'at Jones cut it out. Jones wanted him to go to the city to a big surgeon, but feller insisted, an' Jones done it, an' was mighty surprised to see how good nature healed it over. Well, he wanted to try somethin' else right off, an' he's ben at it ever sence. ' I've a pain,' says the patient. ' Jes' so,' says Jones. ' Don't eat no breakfus' in the mornin', an' at nine o'clock I'll be 'round, give ye a little choloroform, an' cut it out,' he says.

" Then they's old Doc Killeen, kind-hearted a old man as ever lived, ye understan' me. But he was so unfortinit as to be raised with the old idee 'at no med'sin is any good less'n it's made up o' seventeen different drugs, every one of which smells bad, tastes wuss, an' is guaranteed strong enough to kill any disease bug 'at ever hopped, it bein' the doctor's business

to perscribe med'sin as is real med'sin, an' the patient's to take it an' also his chances. Whatever happens, they has the comfort o' knowin' it warn't for lack of strength in the med'sin.

"Then, they might git that feller over to the Springs 'at calls hisself a 'healer.' He 'lows they's somethin' in him he calls magnetism as he c'n give out an' make folks git over their ailments. Nothin' to it, ye understan' me. The hotel folks, some on 'em, tries to tell me that time. 'Yore magnetism's wonderful, Doctor,' one on 'em said t'other day. 'Ma'am,' I says, 'I'm feared yo're mistook. They ain't no good thing in me on'y as He lets me bring good cheer an' give the oil He trusts to me. The magnetism's all in you,' I says. 'I gits it sturted with the oil an' it does wonders,' I says.

"This yere talk of magnetism gives me a ache. 'So much 'lectricity in me!' says the feller. Shucks! Our old tabby c'n give off sparks mos' any time ye rub his back, but he don't set up to be no doctor on that account, ye understan' me. 'Member the magnetic needle Doc Lewis left me an' I used to use. Ain't seen it none o' late, eh? I got so tired o' this talk 'bout magnetism I throwed it away. Ye c'n have magnetism all right, ye understan' me, but ye cain't hand it on to nobody, nor no 'healer' can 'at ever lived.

"They ain't very many as has the sense an' the eddication of Doc Goodman, Davy, ye understan' me, leastways not way out yere in this part o' the country. An' that's why the old man wants his great big boy to push along through that eddication an' make it thorough, make it as good as Doc's. Then, Davy, boy, our great gift of the healin' oil will have a chance to give out its power 'thout bein' handicapped by a ign'rant old man like me, ye understan' me.

"Arter all, they ain't nothin' in medical science 'at is so plumb diff'runt f'm good plain common sense, ye understan' me."

XXI

MR. THORNTON

"ALL things come to him who waits."

The summer that David was twenty-one, when he had spent three years in college, he came home to find the new Inn ready for occupancy. It was not an imposing structure, but it fitted well with its surroundings, for among the doctor's patients was an architect, who had given such supervision as ensured a certain degree of harmony and was a guarantee of convenience and stability.

There was no ceremonial opening.

"They'll come!" the doctor announced in his quiet way. "They'll come jes' as fast as He sends 'em. Best not make no fuss 'bout it. Main objec' of it is to have a place fer them as ain't able to pay, ekal to what they gets as is able, an' if we makes too much blow 'bout it we'll be gittin' some more perfessors, ye understan' me. He'll send them as He wants to come."

As a matter of fact, although the new Inn filled up rapidly, it was chiefly with people quite able and willing to pay their bills, and it was soon to be seen that this class, who came the more eagerly because of the added conveniences of the new structure, would far outnumber those of modest means, who could pay little or nothing. It might be that the people of moderate means did not like to incur travelling expense, or it might mean that they had no time to be "chronics."

Among its early and wealthy occupants were an old lady who had visited the doctor for several seasons, and her grown son, who had come with her for the

first time. The young man, a civil engineer, named Thornton, found David to be his most congenial company and managed to spend a great deal of time with him.

David, at twenty-one, was a grown man, both in physical and mental stature. Johnny Langston, who was a few months his senior, was still a boy, looked the boy, and acted the boy. No one took Johnny seriously. Every one gave David the respectful consideration due man's estate. The young engineer sought his company constantly.

Thornton was frankly sceptical as to the value of the healing oil, and stated that he came chiefly because his mother insisted, and, secondarily, because he needed a rest and thought this as good a place as any for it.

"The old doctor is as honest as can be, I'm sure," he confided to David, one day. "I wasn't quite so sure of that until the other day we were talking together, and I suggested that my firm had quite a little business in oil wells, and that from the signs around there I believed it would pay him a lot better to have an oil well drilled there and get a big gusher, than to peddle his oil this way. The old man gave me a look that was more sorrow than anger. Then he said to me, very properly: 'As far as my healing spring is concerned, I don't propose to discuss it with you one way or the other,' and I think he added there his customary 'ye understan' me.' Then he set me down about where I belonged by saying: 'You don't understand anything about it and I have not enough faith in my powers of explanation to believe that I could make it simple enough for your comprehension. But I do want to say a word or two to you about the hopeless folly of looking at the value of a thing from the standpoint of the money it will bring.' Then he gave me a very incisive lecture in his quaint, blunt way,

the text of which was that when anything God has made could be of use to humankind in the way his oil was of use, it was a most sinful thing to contemplate diverting it for any money considerations."

"I suppose you agreed?" commented David.

"I had to! Standing before him and hearing him talk, there was but one view to take. But it's very different with a young fellow like you."

"Why different?" asked David, tersely.

"For many reasons. You haven't his venerable appearance for one thing, nor his years of faith. You are young and materialistic and educated. The things that in his hands are dignified by his belief, would in you be the merest quackery."

"And yet I am to be his successor."

"You never will be, my boy. You can't be. Your education and reasoning would absolutely forbid it."

"You don't really understand. It's just as Dad says, you can't be expected to understand. This thing is not in the domain of reason. It is a matter of faith. It is not in the realm of natural science. It is supernatural."

"Let me tell you why you say such things to me and to yourself, David. It is because you are uneasy about the matter. Because you cannot reconcile it with common sense and the things you have learned at college, and being unable to reason about it, you would rather make it a matter of dogma. Excuse my plain speech, which intends no offence."

"None taken. I really don't have to justify myself to you, any more than Dad. But I would like to make you see the reasonableness of my position. You have heard how the doctor brought me up and trained me to belief in his methods. But you know, in spite of it all, it would fail if it were not backed by mysterious, supernatural things that cannot be explained away. For one thing the very fact that he—an old man with-

out education or training—cures so many people is supernatural. But it is the method of supply that is so striking a testimony to its supernatural origin. Every day just about so much oil for the day's work. In these times of increased work the spring is giving twice as much as last winter. If all the patients should leave to-night, I know and firmly believe that to-morrow the supply would be cut down to just the right amount for the country folk. And on Saturdays always a double supply—on Sundays a dry spring! How else can you explain it all? If it's supernatural, why should I be a quack to use it?"

"I'm not going to try to explain it, David, but you'll find out about it before many years have passed. Don't imagine that people get well because of the oil. My mother thinks it is doing wonders for me, but, after the first day, when I convinced the doctor that I could by use of a dropper administer it myself, none of it has gone into my system, I assure you. I managed to collect quite a fair amount and have made an analysis. It consists chiefly of hydrocarbons of the marsh gas series, and compares favourably with the product of several of our big wells. But it has in it absolutely nothing that could affect body tissues when used as the doctor administers it. The matter of supply is certainly mysterious, but some day you will get an explanation."

"There is no explanation possible," said David, solemnly. "The old people and I are the only ones having access to it, and I needn't say to you that the doctor is absolutely above any chicanery."

"No, you needn't say it," he agreed. "Every one concedes the doctor's honesty; even those who know him to be wrong. I called at Doctor Goodman's the other day, and the subject happening to come up, I was glad to hear both the doctor and his charming young daughter talk in his defence. And personally I would

give a great deal to have as nice a young lady as Miss Goodman speak for me."

"I suppose so," remarked David, drily, yet with a little embarrassment.

Hitherto David had been disturbed very little by the demon jealousy. He hardly recognized it now, Yet he knew very positively that he did not like this remark about Miss Goodman. He was more upset by it than by the imputations as to the regulation of the flow of healing oil. Johnny Langston and the other young men of the neighbourhood might call on Elsie without giving him a qualm, but for this clever young engineer to express interest and admiration was a very different matter.

David was glad to hear that Doctor Goodman still spoke well of the old doctor, but he knew full well that no such leniency would be extended to himself should he associate in practice with or succeed the old man. It was with full knowledge of this, and a realization of the fact that the time was drawing near when his education would be complete and the separation would have to come, that he had tried this summer to lessen his familiarity at the Goodman home. And the strain of it had made a sore place, which was readily stung to sharpness by the thought of Mr. Thornton's succeeding to his old position.

Perhaps this was what impelled him to jog over to the Goodman place now.

Elsie was on the porch with a young man, but it was only Johnny Langston, so no exceptions were taken.

"David is such an important man this summer, Johnny," complained Elsie; "we scarcely see him at all. Do you?"

"Almost every day," blundered Johnny, cheerfully. "I didn't know he was so very busy."

"Well, he hasn't been here before in two weeks,

and I know he has been busy about the new Inn, for Mr. Thornton told me so," she concluded, with a little touch of malice.

"Of course Mr. Thornton is an authority," blustered Johnny, argumentatively. "I wouldn't think of disputing him; but as David went swimming with me yesterday; fishing the day before, and over to town to see the Cardinals play Monday, I don't believe Mr. Thornton knows as much as he thinks."

"That'll do, Johnny," cut in David. "When I want you to write my life and works I'll let you know."

"Yes, you'd better quiet Johnny if you can, David, for his own good, as well as yours. The girls at the college call him Boswell and you Doctor Johnson half the time now," remarked Elsie with another little sting.

"Funny about girls, especially college girls," mused Johnny. "They set a fellow in his place so confidently. They've got almost every chap in college with a pin run through his head and a typewritten label on it, just like the bugs in the entomological collection."

"You ought not to complain of that, Mr. John Langston," retorted Elsie. "I can remember the time not so very, very long ago when you would have been glad of any kind of a label if you might only be considered of sufficient importance to classify."

"Years ago that may be true, Elsie," acknowledged Johnny. "Dave never had that trouble, though, did he? He was considered a unique specimen right from the start."

Elsie saw a shadow cross David's face, and guessed that his thoughts went back to the attempt to brand him in his freshman year. "David is different," she hastened to say. "He is not classified yet. The girls have pasted him with 'most every label they have, one time or another, in his three years. The Sorority girls

called him a brute that first year, when he made the Carryall win everything, but the Barbs hung the hero sign on him right then. Then when he got the college team to going and won the first games in years, every one shouted 'hero.' When he stopped athletics because it cut into his studies some of the girls labelled him a 'dear,' but I'm afraid most of them said 'dub.' When he won the Junior Science scholarship they all cried 'great,' but when he came back to the ball team, for the good of the college, and helped you win the game with the State University, there was no class for him outside of the gods of Greek mythology. And you needn't colour up like that either, David," for he was at his old trick of easy colouring.

"Them was certainly most decidedly great days, as superlative Holly would have said, eh, Dave? Have you ever heard anything of Brother Bill Holly since he left school that first year?"

"Not a word. Not a sign," replied David. "I asked Tom Bixby about him the last time I saw him, and he said he hadn't seen Holly since the day he threw him out of his own room."

"See a good deal of Bixby now, don't you, Dave? Quite chummy, ain't you?"

"Johnny's jealous, I declare," observed Elsie; "jealous of Tom Bixby!'

"Baseball players are always jealous, Elsie, especially pitchers," explained David. "The trouble with Johnny and Bixby is they are both such splendid pitchers that they run each other close all the time. We need both of them on the college team, and they've got to keep the peace."

"Do catchers ever get jealous of anybody?" asked Elsie, innocently.

Johnny was so overcome by mirth at this innocent little remark that David felt compelled to chase him

off the premises. Johnny went away in merriment, explaining that he had to go, anyway.

"You see, Elsie," explained David, taking up the subject of Bixby again, "I don't see any more, nor as much, of Bixby as I do of Johnny, and the old boy has no cause to think so. But since Bix and I are both aiming for medicine we naturally see a good deal of each other. I've always liked him, ever since he stood up for me that first year."

"Why don't you have him up to see you sometime?" asked Elsie.

David hesitated.

"That's a little hard to answer," he said at last. "You see Tom is a doctor's son, brought up in a doctor's home just as you have been. It would be awfully hard to explain to him all about the healing oil and about Dad's way of practice. With you, it's different, because you've known of it always. But I don't want to have to explain it to Tom; not just yet. It's all right for me. I know it's all right. But Tom wouldn't understand."

"Are you still quite sure yourself that it is all right?" asked Elsie, in a low tone.

"Quite sure, Elsie. It must be. It cannot be anything but right."

"But, David," Elsie reasoned, gently, "your friends are beginning to think that you should begin to see that it is not all right. Daddy was saying only yesterday that he supposed with your three years in college you would have some rather advanced ideas, now."

"Elsie, you know what I've done in college. I don't have to tell you about the science scholarship and a few other things. But I don't advance and I can't advance beyond certain stubborn facts. The chief of these is Dad's goodness and faith, backed as it is by the supernatural flow of the oil spring; the other is that he has

brought me from the lowest pit, raised me and trained me, and is happy in his old age expecting me to take his place. There's where my advancement stops. How can I go beyond it?"

"I don't see how, David. It is a hard situation. When I talk with you it seems that you must be right, but when I think of the views of other educated people, and especially when I talk with father, I feel that something must come to convince you. Only yesterday we talked about it and I told father some of your arguments. Most of them didn't seem nearly so effective when he dealt with them, David. As to educated people believing in the treatment, he says there has never been an irregular medical fad, no matter how erratic, that did not have its following of senators and lawyers and clergymen and even doctors. He believes their ailments unbalance their judgment to some extent. These fads explode and the very same people will be just as ardent in support of a new one. Then he doesn't believe much in the argument of cures. He says slight temporary improvements are often counted as cures, when a real investigation would show the contrary. A fair percentage of cures are bound to occur in any system of treatment that includes rest, fresh air, good food, and absence of worry. Under regular medical treatment they pass unnoticed every day, but under any special system they are regarded as miracles. Father says it may be all right for the old doctor, but he looks for the time to come, very soon, when you will change."

"It never will, Elsie." David spoke almost bitterly. "It never will. I have made up my mind that I must begin to steel myself against the opinions of my friends, for I am bound to disregard them. My way is cut out for me and I must travel it. I must begin now."

"And is that why you have had plenty of time for

Johnny lately, and none for me?" Elsie asked the question in a low voice, with drooping eyes.

"Yes, that is why, Elsie," David admitted. "My spirit rebels against it, but my sober sense tells me that our ways are going to be as if there were oceans and continents between us. I would rather begin to branch gradually off now than to wait a time and then suddenly to snap off the closest ties of friendship."

"You would do that, would you, David? You could do it?"

"Yes, I could and would—not for any principles—not for the healing spring—not because I feel any mission—but for the old doctor, I would."

"And your other friends, David? Do they get no consideration?"

"Elsie, you wouldn't ask such a question if you really knew. One reason why I want to begin my lonely road now is because I fear that later on my resolution might fail. Even now I have to repeatedly remind myself of Dad's goodness and his solemn dependence on me. He thinks everything of it, Elsie. It is a sacred thing to him. Why, if he were to die to-night, he would go happy in the belief that I would take up the work he leaves. Could I desert such a trust?"

"David, you know Doctor better than I. Do you think he would want you to take up a work you did not thoroughly believe in?"

"He will never have any occasion to think of such a thing, Elsie. No one can say that I do not believe in it."

"Perhaps not. Still, you did not answer my question. But if I'm to see so little of you, I won't worry you with problems. Where's Victory, and why didn't you bring him? You know I always love to see him."

"Victory is tied up at home. There is another mad-

dog scare, and I think it best to keep him up for a while. That reminds me that I got in Dad's mail yesterday a booklet on 'Rabies' from the Bureau of Public Health."

"You needn't be so important about it, sir. We got one, too."

"What was yours about?" asked David, mischievously.

"Oh, of course, I haven't read it yet. You don't expect one to read Public Health reports the minute they come, as if they were the last issue of one's favourite magazine."

"Their reports are always mighty interesting. I'll bet this one is, though I'll admit I haven't yet read it myself," admitted David.

"You stir my curiosity, David. I'll run in and get our copy and you can show me the thrilling parts."

She was back in a moment, and David prepared to read to her his selections.

"What a charming picture!" called a voice from the path. "The young man reads to his charming fair the latest thrilling romance."

They looked up to see Mr. Thornton, who playfully but with calm assurance reached for the book.

'Here's richness!" he ejaculated. "'Facts and Problems of Rabies'! Who but Doctor Sobersides would discuss hydrophobia in all its phases with the fair sex?"

David rose lithely to his feet. He was angry at the disturbance, though he preserved an outward composure.

"I'm afraid I have stayed longer than I should," he said. "I will leave you to the flippant nothings of Mr. Light and Airy. Good-evening."

He was almost home before he discovered that he held Elsie's book tightly clasped in his hand.

XXII

THE DIVINELY REGULATED SUPPLY

THERE was plenty of opportunity for David to read in the next few days, for he purposely avoided Thornton, and Johnny chose, for some reason, to stay away. But every time that he took up Elsie's book, his thoughts would revert to their conversation, and he would lose himself in idle musings.

But a week later his interest was sharply revived. It was late in the evening when a man knocked at the door.

"Hello, Jake," the doctor greeted him. "Glad to see ye. S'pose ye don't come ter see me 'bout nobody bein' sick sence you folks allus calls on Doc Goodman when ye're ailin'. I'm right glad too, 'cause I don't want ter see no more sick folk to-night, ye understan' me. Too tired. Gettin' old, Jake."

"Well, it's 'bout sickness I come, Doc. But I don't 'low to trouble ye to-night. My little boy and gal was both bit by a mad dog two days gone. Doc Goodman come an' done what he could. Then he sent the dog's head to the State Board of Health, an' they wired him to-day the dog had hydrofoby. Now he wants me to take the children up there fer what he calls the 'Pasture treatment,' which he says is a sure cure."

"An' why not, Jake?" responded the old doctor. "'Tain't no good to come to me expectin' me ter say nothin' agen' Doc Goodman's cures."

"Well, I ain't got nothin' against no Pasture treatment only it costs a hundred dollars apiece. That's

out of reason, I say. Doc says people that's poverty-struck gets it done fer nuthin, but I ain't zackly poverty-struck, an' Doc knows it."

" No, Jake, ye ain't poverty-struck. An' ye ought to be ashamed ter hold yer head up on yer neck to think of hesitatin' at spendin' the money on them two dear childern. I just wanted ter see what ye'd say. Now, listen ter me, Jake. I've heer'n tell about this Pasture treatment an' it don't 'pear right sensible ter me. Now my madstone I've tried an' know about. Now, here's what ye do, ye understan' me. You bring them childern here fust thing in mornin' an' we'll put that stone on 'em. Ef it don't stick ye kin take 'em for the Pasture treatment or where ye want an' it don't cost ye a cent. If it sticks, ye pay me. But no five-dollar prices this time! No! Ye pay a hunderd dollars apiece! I'll undertake ter use it fer the childern's good. No, sir, I won't argy. You be here with them childern fust thing or see what'll happen. Ye know me, Jake."

The man went away angry, but the old doctor chuckled as he turned to his book: " He'll be here, all right. See if he ain't."

David went to his room, and again took up the booklet, " Facts and Problems of Rabies." This time he read it all through. It was deeply interesting. Then he read it again, and yet again. He lingered long over the paragraph in which he found the madstone: " Superstitious and erroneous beliefs." He read carefully, as if memorizing: " The belief in these ' stones ' is a positive danger, since they possess none of the powers attributed to them, and their employment to the exclusion of scientific means of protection has been the cause of many deaths." He was impressed by the statement that one hundred and eleven deaths from hydrophobia had occurred the preceding year. He read with careful study the account of Pasteur's care-

fully worked out plan, and its reasonableness made a strong appeal to his student-mind. In his work in science he had already studied about Pasteur and knew how high he ranked.

Again and again he went over the article until the whole history of hydrophobia was before him and the Pasteur treatment was clear in his mind. Evidently the state bacteriologist had, in the case of these children, found the "Negri bodies," which proved the presence of rabies. He remembered that when Wolf had bitten the two boys, and the madstone had adhered and so "cured" the boy, Doctor Goodman had received a mysterious report from the state capital that no "nigger bodies" were found.

But here was a positive diagnosis! It meant that if the madstone were relied upon the children would die an appalling death! What should he do? Was it worth while to try to explain it to the old doctor? Absurd! Would it do simply to plead with the old man, as a favour to himself, not to treat the children? It was more reasonable, for he would do much for him, but duty was the obstacle, and the one thing the old doctor would not set aside. What should he do?

The hours of the night slipped away, but he could take no rest with this great problem before him. Once again he read the report, and lingered over the description of the madstone.

"Tricalcium-phosphate," he mused. "If this one has that composition I know an acid that would eat it to a powder."

Could he do it? Could he go deliberately into the sacred spring-house and destroy a thing that the old doctor held among his cherished possessions?

Not if any other way existed; but if not, then he must.

On his knees he prayed for light. Turning the pages of the book, he looked for a solution. It was

nearly three o'clock when he slipped out of the house and made his way to the inn where, in a small room, he maintained his little laboratory and kept such chemicals as he used.

Day was just beginning to break as he crept quietly up to the door of the spring-house. Never before had he ventured to enter alone; certainly never on such a desecrating errand. He felt like a thief as he crept along in the early morning gloom. Once safely inside he stopped, drew a deep breath as he straightened up and wiped from his forehead the clammy sweat.

Surely that was not the door opening again?

He dodged quickly behind a big barrel in sudden apprehension. Had the old doctor seen him, after all, and followed to see what this unusual visit meant? What should he say? What should he do?

The door opened wide, and in the dim light David saw, with great relief, that it was not the doctor but Aunt Mercy. He could explain to Aunt Mercy. He could beg her secrecy and be sure of it, because no one was more careful of the doctor's feelings.

He was about to speak when it dawned upon him that she was neither looking at him nor for him. In the dim morning light he could just see that she held in her hand a large pitcher. She went straight to the spring, raised the pitcher, and to David's straining vision was presented the picture of Aunt Mercy pouring in oil.

It was Saturday morning!

She left as quietly as she had entered, and, as the door closed behind her, it shut David in with his shattered ideals.

He was recalled to his errand by the vial in his hand. He went carelessly over to the stand on which rested the madstone, raised the case, and poured a little of the liquid. A sizzling sound and a little puff of vapour responded.

David swung open the door of the spring-house and in a dazed, mechanical fashion groped his way into the house and to his bed. Nature was triumphant now, and he dozed into a restless sleep.

David slept the heavy sleep of mental and physical exhaustion. When he awoke the sun was high. Through the open window he heard the doctor's voice.

"Glad ye got here, Jake. Them's the little childern now, is they? Yes, it's a bad bite, honey, but Doc won't hurt ye none. You set down right yere an' we'll bring the stone right up an' put it on an' it won't hurt the least mite."

David looked cautiously out.

The doctor was just bringing from the sacred spring-house the stand which served as a resting-place for the precious madstone, serenely unconscious of any disturbance. Indeed, from David's viewpoint, there seemed no reason otherwise, for the stone was there, apparently much as ever.

"Now, honey, they ain't much to it, ye understan' me," David heard him say. "All's ter do, I tek this nice leetle stone——"

He stopped abruptly in his attempt to pick it up. The shell crumbled between his fingers.

David felt a keen pang of remorse, followed by a sincere thankfulness that he was not down there to face the old doctor's dismay.

The old man looked at the crumbled residue in bewilderment. He passed his hand across his eyes and looked again. Then his usual look of peace settled again on his features.

"It's jest as He says, Mercy," he addressed his wondering sister. "Some way the stone is jest a crumpled-up shell. But it's jest as He says, an' ef He don't want it that-er-way they must go some place else. I wish't Davy was yere."

"Why ain't he?" asked Aunt Mercy.

"I'm feared the boy's ailin'. I callate ter look him over soon's I git through. I heard noises in his room in the night, an' when I peeked in whiles back ter tell him we was ready to begin, he's hard asleep an' lookin' bad. I jes' didn't have no heart ter wake him, tired as he 'peared ter be."

An added pang pierced David's sensitive heart as he listened to these words of gentle consideration. He put out his head.

"I'll be down in a minute, Dad," he called.

"Nev' mind, Davy, boy," answered the doctor. "We kain't do nothin' nohow. Some visitation has struck our stone an' it's crumpled to ashes."

David was glad to be excused a direct meeting with the doctor at the time. He was gone to make calls before David came down, but Aunt Mercy was waiting with a late breakfast. She sat across the room and watched him throughout his meal, with a most uncommon interest. No sooner was the meal finished than she began to talk.

"Davy, I've ben out an' looked at the tracks in the spring-house, an' what I wants ter know is what good it done ye, an' what for ye did it?" She stated her premises in a positive tone that admitted of no dispute. David made no attempt at defence or denial.

"I'm glad you ask me, Aunt Mercy," said he, "because it gives me a chance to ask an equally direct question of you. Does Dad know how the oil supply is regulated by you?"

"Now I know you was there in the spring-house when I came in this mornin', Davy, an' if ye know so much I'll tell ye all they is ter tell. An' fust off I'll tell ye 'at Doc don't know. Mebbe you don't care to know nothin' else."

"I certainly do, Aunt Mercy. I'd like to know all about it. I'd like to know how it could go on all these years and Dad know nothing of it?"

"Well, Davy, I s'pose you'll think I'm a mighty wicked old woman, an' I don't s'pose you'll see why I done it even when I tell ye, but I'm goin' to tell right from the start.

"'Peared like when Doc come here he jes' felt he was goin' ter do somethin' special right f'm the start. The pore folks aroun', they had more or less b'lief in the ile f'm what Doc Lewis had did with it, an' when they foun' Doc wouldn't charge nothin' but what they was minded ter give they jes' come in crowds. Doc was that pleased! He said right away the Almighty was in it—it was His ile an' he'd use it fer Him. All the time he got stronger an' stronger in b'leevin' the ile was special sent.

"Then, one Sunday mornin' he come in an' he says: 'Mercy, they's mighty little ile. D'ye s'pose it's going dry?' I c'd tell by his looks he was real scairt. We'd jest ben readin' 'bout the manna in the wilderness not comin' on Sunday, so jes' ter comfort him, I says: 'Mebbe it's goin' ter be like the manna back in the desert—won't none of it come on Sunday.'

"Well, he was jes' so tuk up with the idee an' so eager ter watch fer the next Sunday 'at I jes' couldn't bear he should be disappointed, an' early Sunday mornin', afore he was likely ter be round, I gets up an' scoops it all out. Well, he cert'ny was joyful.

"Then he 'pears ter think 'at they ought ter be an extry amount Sat'dy ter even things up an' make it like the manna was, so early Sat'dy mornin' I puts some in.

"An' I've watched the ile ever sence an' done what was needed fer it, an' Doc's ben happy an' used it wonderful, an' ef I had it ter do over, I'd do it agen. I'd do it fer Doc!"

She paused and looked David in the face with a defiant look curiously at variance with her usual placid expression.

David did not utter a word.

After a while she let her gaze relax, and her lips parted in an interrogatory, "Well?"

"Nothing from me, Aunt Mercy," responded David. "I suppose it would just about break Dad's heart if he knew."

"I s'pose it would. An' I s'pose you think I'm jes' the same as a liar an' a hipperkrit, but I done it meanin' well for Doc."

Then she added: "An' it's give him lots o' happy times, an' nobody ain't the wuss fer it, an' lots o' people say they're better. Why's it wrong? Everythin' was peaceful an' well. Why should you, as Doc has raised up an' done everythin' fer, come ter spile it all?"

"Who said I was going to spoil it all, Aunt Mercy? Don't you think I care anything for Dad's happiness?"

"I reckon ye do, Davy, boy. Furgive an old woman fer talkin' too quick. But don't I know ye, boy? Don't I know 'at you're as much like Doc as if you was his own flesh an' blood? Don't I know 'at you kain't hev no peace nor rest s'long as you think anythin' ain't jes' straight? You may think ye ain't goin' ter do nuthin'. But ye are an' ye will. Ye kain't he'p it, noways."

David's face was buried in his hands. At last, his broad shoulders heaved with a tremendous sigh and he raised his head.

"I can't tell him about it, Aunt Mercy, and I don't suppose he need ever know. He'll have to discover the difference for himself, gradually. One thing, even if the supply of the oil is not sacred, as has been supposed, it has done and is doing good work in the doctor's hands, and perhaps his use of it is just as much inspired as he thinks. There was no question of divine regulation of supply when he began to use it

and probably he will choose to continue its use even when he finds the supply to be natural."

"You mean I must stop doin' anything to the ile, an' jes' let it come and let him find out that it's much the same every day of the week alike?"

"That seems the best way. We can't wilfully keep up a deception, and at the same time it doesn't seem necessary to harrow up his feelings by letting him know about it."

"I guess ye are mebbe right, David. But we kain't begin at wunst. I know Doc better nor you. He ain't over his madstone crumbling yet. He'll hev to rastle mos' powerful 'bout it ter make sure it ain't 'cause of somethin' he's did. Ef this come right a top o' the other he'd feel sure it meant he was cast off, an' it'd jes' about break his heart, if it didn't send him crazy."

David sat with a troubled face.

"I don't know what to do, Aunt Mercy," he said at last. "I don't want to interfere with Dad's plans and the work he's doing. Here's the new Inn with every room filled and all the people saying how much good he does 'em. Now even if it isn't the oil, if it is perhaps a certain personal magnetism that helps, what's the difference? I'm certainly not the one to go breaking into things."

"Right there ye be talking sense, Davy. I've always thought that way. It's himself! It ain't what he uses. But ye see ef he thinks it is, jes' as you say, what's the difference? Senator got here yes'day, Davy. See what a right smart man like him has to say. On'y don't let him guess why ye ask."

XXIII

THE SENATOR EXPLAINS

AUNT MERCY'S suggestion to talk with the Senator fitted well with a desire that had long been in David's heart, but kept down from a feeling that it might be disloyal.

The Senator was always "on view" in his visits to the Corners. David found him without difficulty. His summer work on the farm had kept him out of the Senator's sight in his visits of late years, so the boy had changed into a young man since their last meeting, and was obliged to announce himself.

"Little Dave!" exclaimed the Senator. "Who'd have thought you would make so much of a man! You must meet my friend Mr. Tilford, David. This is the boy I told you about, Tilford." There was no trouble about inducing conversation, for the Senator—a "silver-tongued orator"—was always lined with veins ready to be tapped.

"Yes. I'm feeling quite fit, Davy," he replied to his quiet greeting. "Thanks to your good foster-parent and his spring, aided perhaps by a few little preparations I have discovered for myself, for use between visits, I keep in a very average condition of health."

Looking at the Senator's abdominous figure and puffy face, David always felt a surprise that such an instrument could send forth such beautiful, nellow tones.

"Yes, I'll be glad to have you walk with me, my boy. Doctor always insists upon it, this walking. I can't help feeling sometimes, David, that he may be

overdoing it. I'm not complaining, of course, but I'm not so young as I was ten years ago, and I feel the tax upon my vitality. Strange thing this vitality of ours, David. I have thought much on problems of human health and strength, and I have evolved a theory which I think almost beyond dispute. I think that our physiologists always make their researches from a purely materialistic standpoint, and overlook some of the finer and grander functions of our organs, functions which men of deeper thought must discover.

"Now, I suppose no one disputes that the stomach is the real seat of all vitality, necessarily the place where vitality is manufactured, being the receptacle and digesting organ of the food which produces it. Your physiologist has learned that the food we eat is changed by the stomach into so much body-forming material and so much waste, which it is the function of the intestines to carry away. He stops there. That great tissue the perineum he thinks of merely as an apron to cover up the intestines in their sewerage work. He overlooks a far finer function. I have learned that this perineum is really a closed sack. The physiologists don't know why, but I can tell them. It is a reservoir for the excess vitality which the stomach manufactures and that's why a good meal sets a man up so and increases his vitality. This walking draws on this store too much. I can feel the depleting effect right now as I walk. You agree with me, Tilford? You find my theory easy of acceptance?" He turned to his older companion.

"Yes, I agree with you, Senator. Not that I know anything about it or have any reason for thinking that you do. But when you talk in that voice and with that earnest flash, I'm like any of the voters at the crossroads, I think you're a great man and bound to be right, whether I know anything of the subject or not, or even if I know in sober common sense it can't be

so. You can get me any time with your 'vote-getting' voice."

The Senator, in nowise offended, chuckled his appreciation.

David was glad to be unobserved that he might better hide his bewilderment and dismay at the absurd mistakes which even his slight knowledge of physiology and anatomy readily detected in the Senator's remarks. When, at last, he was appealed to, he simply asked what the doctor thought of it.

"The doctor neither agrees nor disagrees," replied the Senator. "He frankly says that he knows nothing about it, and doesn't consider it any of his business. But you yourself, David? You have studied physiological science."

"A little, Senator, but hardly enough to allow me to understand so advanced a proposition," answered David, drily. Then, to change the subject: "You spoke of certain preparations which you use between visits, Senator. What does the doctor say about them?"

"Doesn't tolerate them at all, David. Says they keep me down. The doctor is very arbitrary. But it's no good with me. I've always been a sort of a free-lance in medical matters, have evolved my own theories, and held myself at liberty to take new ones whenever I was so inclined. That's how I came here in the first place. The doctor ought to remember that."

"I've never known how that was," said David, snatching his opportunity. "I think it was the year before I came."

"Well, it's ten years now, and that's longer than I ever stayed with any one system in my life, you may like to know, since it is a compliment to your father. I had rather a hard season in Washington. There was an extra session, which was quite a strain. Aside

from my regular work came any number of banquets and dinners and evening affairs, which lasted until the day after. I was pretty badly out of sorts.

"I took a few things I had at hand first, and I remember my secretary had a box of Bunkum's Panpath Pilules, which had some fine endorsements, so I took them. But nothing seemed to be more than a temporary benefit. I took a course of baths, went through a diet system—I remember I had to eat three ounces of raw oat-flakes, one lemon, and three raw eggs each meal; it was quite radical—took a regular massage treatment, and finally in desperation I went to see some doctors who were using a good deal of space in the daily papers at that time and printing some remarkable cures. I announced myself simply as 'Mister,' but it is hard for a prominent man to conceal his identity, and at my second visit I found they knew all about me. There were three of them examined me that day, I well remember, and they were much disturbed over my condition or, at least, gave that impression. When they had finished, one of them—the chief surgeon—gave me their joint opinion. My life was not guaranteed by them for one week without operation. They wanted to put me in their private hospital at once for preparation. I begged a night to think it over.

"Riding home on the street car I found myself next to Uncle Jimmy Wright, who was a Senate messenger that year. The old man asked after my health, and the conversation easily brought up the advised operation. I readily recall the old man's indignation and his quaint expression:

"'Not for Uncle Jimmy. No, sir! Not on the recommend of no three nor no thirty perfessional butchers, no, sir! I got to die some day, I know, but less'n it's a steamboat explosion, or somethin', I ain't nowise responsible for, I aims to die in one piece.

When Gabriel sounds his trump an' tells me it's time to git up an' appear before the throne, I ain't expectin' to fuss around with any argyment that he must please wait whiles I pulls myself together, so to speak. No, sir! What I'd do? I'd go back home to the only honest doctor, old Doc Williams!' And then he went on to tell me all about your father.

"That evening I took the westbound express, and came here to the doctor. He started work at once in his usual way, and I've never had any operation yet, and I haven't the remotest thought that I shall ever submit my body to such a desecration."

He had finished, and David had learned all that he wished to know, but there was no help in it for him.

He was obliged to tell Aunt Mercy the outcome.

"No, it didn't help a bit, Aunt Mercy. He is a Senator, and I suppose he is a great man on questions of law and tariff and so forth, but he hasn't the wisdom of a baby in medical matters. Worse than that he has an awful stock of wrong ideas. Why, he thinks the stomach digests all the food, and the intestinal tract is nothing but a sewer! And he spoke of some absurd thing which he supposed was a function of the 'perineum,' evidently not knowing that the perineum is very different from the peritoneum. And, worst of all, the three doctors Dad saved him from, the ones who declared an operation a necessity for him, were nothing but advertising sharks.

"He doesn't help a bit. He makes things worse!"

It was well for David during those troubled days that he had Aunt Mercy to talk with and temper his decisions. After the first shock of the disclosure David bore no resentment against her for her guileless deception. She was his mother just as the doctor was his father. The question, now, was how to set the matter on a right basis without letting things come to

the doctor's knowledge, which might both wound his sensitive conscience and cause him to think poorly of Aunt Mercy. For the present the whole matter was a secret between them. It was a relief to both that there was at least one who knew, and they had many discussions about their problems.

"There's just one man I'd like to talk this over with, if I only might," suggested David, one morning. "He could give me good advice, and his advice would be worth taking."

Aunt Mercy looked at him with a pitying eye.

"Davy, boy, don't ye set yore mind that-er-way. It kain't mean nothin' but trouble for ye. I s'pose I'd orter told ye before, but I hated it so. Doc Goodman,—I know it's him ye mean,—he come over here one night when you was away, an' he had a long talk with Doc. He come right to the p'int an' says: 'Doc,' says he, 'I've come ter speak 'bout yore boy an' my gal. I don't know what they think of one another,' says he, 'they ain't nothin' ever ben said 'bout it, leastways not ter me, but I know both of 'em's growin' up,' he says, 'an' I propose ter hev an understandin' fore they gits ter be anything serious,' he says.

"Well, yore daddy he seemed real pleased, an' he spoke right up. 'That's all right, Doc,' he says. 'I'm right glad ye come. I've allus liked yore little gel,' he says, 'an' if it's 'greeable to you it cert'ny is ter me, and I'll bet Davy'll be on'y too willin',' he says.

"But Doc Goodman turned right round on him. 'Ye don't understan' me, Doctor,' he says. 'I don't know thet yore boy wants my gel, an' I don't b'lieve ye know more'n guessin' yoreself. I don't know that my gel'd hev yore boy an' don't know thet she's so much es give it a thought. But it might come to it some day, they's no denyin'.'

"'I've often thunk it,' Doc broke in, laffin' es pleased as c'd be, 'but they ain't no hurry. Both of

'em is young yet, an' they got their eddication to finish.'

"Doc Goodman he was gettin' real upsot now, 'cause Doc didn't seem to sense what he was drivin' at, an' then it come out all at wunst. 'But what I want ter say is thet I don't want 'em ter think no more of each other, less'n yore boy's goin' ter drop this yere bizness an' practise med'cine right or leave it alone. It's all right mebbe for you, Doctor Williams, and I've allus treated you like a man an' a neighbour, but with David it'd jes' be quackery. An' I don't propose to hev my daughter married to no quack.'

"Davy, I never seen Doc—ner fer that matter, Doc Goodman—so upsot in my life. They was both a-glarin' at each other like they might be ready ter fight, an' they both of 'em such gentle-minded creatur's in common. Doc Goodman got himself in hand fust. 'I don't mean nuthin' offensive,' says he, 'I ain't aplyin' that term ter you, never have and never would, but I'm boun' ter say that if Davy, with all his eddication, follers yore way it'd fit him. An' my gel's happiness is too precious to let things go along without speakin' right out.'

"Doc had himse'f so he c'd speak by then, but all he said at fust was the scripture: 'When He was reviled He reviled not again.' Then he follered it up by sayin', 'The boy'll have ter learn it. It'll be hard fer him, but it's part of his mission, jes' as it's ben of mine an' was of His. Don't ye fear, Doctor Goodman. Davy'll stay by his mission. He's one of them that is "sent."'

"Doc Goodman went with nary another word, an' Doc said nothin' more, but I makes up my mind right then thet I'll hev ter tell ye. It's cruel hard, Davy. It's wuss'n cuttin' with a knife. But it's best ye sh'd know."

David had sat quietly through her story, while a

hot flush of humiliation crept all over him. Yes, he had been fool enough to have vague, scarcely acknowledged thoughts that perhaps, now that things were being explained so fast, he might go on with the regular course in medicine and might allow himself to think of Elsie again. But nothing was really changed, nor likely to change. The oil was still there. The doctor would still use it. He had not really believed in the oil for years, after all. It was the doctor he believed in. It was not to the oil that he owed allegiance; it was to the doctor.

And the doctor still believed in the oil, and would continue to do so. More than that, he was a traitorous wretch even to feel a regret that a thing which gave his benefactor so much happiness should continue. Why should feelings for Elsie be balanced for one moment against feelings for the man to whom he owed everything? Honesty! Yes, it was a fine thing that he should pretend that honesty demanded exposure, when he knew full well that the thing which really clamoured for it was the hope of conciliating Doctor Goodman.

Such thoughts jostled each other through his mind as Aunt Mercy talked. When she finished, tears were in her eyes, tears of sympathy and compassion for his blighted hopes. But he was dry-eyed, and there was not a sob in his voice as he said: "Thank you, Aunt Mercy. I am glad you have told me."

XXIV

ANOTHER BLUE RIBBON

FORTUNATELY for David the college term drew near. In his despondency he had imagined that the joy of it all was gone, and had even thought of giving it up altogether. But as the day drew near interest revived in spite of himself; and when, at last, he reached the college and was greeted in the old familiar way on every hand, and saw on all sides the old familiar scenes, he awoke to the conclusion that, after all, life was worth while.

He was a Senior this year—more than that, a leading Senior—among the highest of the high. He was captain of the college ball team and president of its leading society—the Carryall. Wherever he walked he met those who greeted him with cheerful allegiance, and it was not uncommon for him to overhear a hasty: "Look! That's Williams!" And once it was followed by the explanation: "Best all-round athlete in college, and honour man in science, too!"

What more could student-heart desire?

Uncle Jimmy had his old room ready, and as he shut himself in the first day he made a resolve that a lot of hard work should be done within its walls that winter.

He had long since ceased studying mathematics with Elsie, but had continued to be a very frequent caller at the little house in the suburbs where she stayed. Now that was all past and gone. This winter must mean only hard work. He had not seen Elsie for a month. She was in one or two of his classes, and

he waited for the first of these with mixed feelings of hope and despair.

He went home from the class with hope extinguished and despair reigning.

Else had been nice. She had been natural. She had been unnaturally natural. The greeting she gave him was as cordial as the one she gave Johnny. There was an entire absence of embarrassment or restraint, and he wanted none. But the thing that caused his despair was the absence of another thing—a certain glance of understanding to which he had become accustomed,—a certain telepathic flash of welcome that was for him alone; perceived by him, received by him, and a blank to all the world besides.

It was with the gloom of these thoughts in his mind that David resolved to lose himself in work, to steel himself against the friends who would surely drop him when he became a "quack doctor," and to try to prepare himself for the burden which was thrust upon him.

The immediate excuse which he gave for his non-appearance in the various social affairs of the college life was his entrance into the competition for the Austrian Science Scholarship. This was a Senior award which gave the winner funds for a year's original research work in Vienna and Berlin, and was considered the great prize of the college. David was governed by two motives in entering the competition, one being the excuse it gave for exclusive study—the other a vague idea that it might lead to a way out of his difficulties.

The chief opponent to his plan was Johnny Langston, who had no mind to be thus frigidly dropped after years of the close intimacy of chumming. In spite of his protests, however, David wore his sackcloth quite persistently for the first months of the term.

Johnny came in one afternoon in October.

"Here's little brother again, Dave," he announced, in his usual bantering fashion. "You can't lose me, Davy."

"No such desire, you old leech," responded David, with an effort at cheer. "You are my calendar. I tear a page off you as certain as the day goes by."

"You will continue to have the pleasure, Mr. Grinder. My motto for this year is, 'Count that day lost whose low, descending sun sees not old David poked up for some fun.'"

"It's right good of you, my gentle josher. You're one of the kind of friends I'd like to keep."

"It not being a matter of your volition you probably will, so you may stick that item on your already overburdened mind. By the way, did you know your mind was getting overburdened?"

"Never heard that one before. What's the answer?"

"No joke about this. I just as good as got it from the faculty. You know Cousin George attends faculty meetings, now he is assisting Professor Garver. They say you're going stale. Honest, they do! I don't see why it isn't so, too. Just as easy to overtrain in study as in sport. They'll be calling you up to tell you about it one of these days. Garver says you ought to win that Scholarship in a walk if you train right, but you're losing your 'pepp,' or, as he says, 'original spirit.'"

David's confusion at this disclosure was evident in his flushed face—the tell-tale which he had never been able to control—but it was not in his voice as he replied:

"Always glad to learn the other fellow's signals, Johnny. I wonder if I don't walk enough. I've been out every day, either in the country or on the track."

"Yes, I guess you walk enough. Walking doesn't

give you pepp, old red-head. Take the advice of old Doctor Langston, and get out among 'em again. Be your own sweet self once more, my fair-haired boy. Right now I am here to tell you that you are a member of a committee which will meet at Elsie Goodman's in about half an hour to arrange for a Halloween straw-ride for the Senior class. You put on that blue sweater with the pretty 'L' on it, and come along with old Doctor Johnny to have some of his patent elixir of lively life squirted into you."

"'Nuff said, you Langston boy." David made a quick gesture of attack. "I can't afford to let myself be led astray by dissolute companions. Now, you get out of here before I put you out."

"I'd like to invite you to do it, you pale-faced, hollow-eyed, auburn-topped bookworm. I'd enjoy taking you on in the shape you are now. But I don't want you to get a licking from your last remaining friend. Come along and go with me."

"Johnny, I can't do it." David dropped his banter. "It isn't just a matter of study. I've just got to break away from you people. Can't you see it? Put yourself in my place. Can't you see that in another year or so, when I take up the work Dad wants me to, you people will hardly be willing to talk to me over the long-distance telephone. I'm doing it deliberately, boy. I don't want to be dropped by you folks. I'm dropping you."

"Awfully sorry, old fellow, but you can't do it, you know," Johnny returned, calmly. "Don't know who you mean by 'you folks,' but it doesn't apply to me. I don't care what you do, now or hereafter. If you are going to run a medicine show, I'll go along and light the gasoline torches and do a comic song in costume to draw the crowd, or give out handbills, or 'most anything you say. But you can't drop me. I don't see what the excitement's all about, anyway.

We've known all along that you were going to follow Doc."

"But it's different, Johnny. I'm telling you this in sacred confidence; I've changed my views. I used to believe the work was justified by supernatural signs. Now I know better. Never mind how. It's nothing to Dad's discredit, but I've had my eyes opened. But although I no longer believe in it I've still got to follow it because I must keep faith with the old doctor."

"I thought I knew Doc fairly well, Dave. I never supposed he'd want you to keep to anything that wasn't on the square."

"He doesn't. I can't make you understand, because I can't tell the whole story. But everything is square enough to his mind. Maybe it's square to most other people, too. It's certainly square to the ones who get well. If the ends justify the means, it's square enough to any one. I'm all mixed up myself, Johnny, so it would be hopeless to try to make you understand."

"And you won't come up with me to that committee meeting at Elsie's?"

"No, I won't.'

"All right, you're hopeless. But Doctor Langston will call again to-morrow."

"Always glad to see him for a short, brief little visit. Don't you forget that what I've told you is in confidence?" David shouted his last words after the vanishing figure.

He sat down on the back steps overlooking Uncle Jimmy's garden, his chin resting in his hand, his gaze far away. His book lay unopened at his side. He was lonely. He was gloomy. He felt desolate. Even Vic had chased off after Johnny Langston, and deserted him.

There had been no gloomy evenings in his previous college year. Every day had been full, every even-

ing had been crowded. His thoughts had been full of the jollity of student doings.

The evening began to darken, and he sat alone. Then he felt Vic's damp muzzle pushed into his neck, and was glad the dog had come back. He was not so lonely.

How some of the young freshmen, eating out their hearts with homesickness in their new boarding-houses, would have laughed at the idea of Williams being lonely!

But he pulled the old dog to him and patted him and rubbed him, and found his fingers entangled in something encircling his neck. Like a flash his memory brought back a similar occurrence long ago. He examined eagerly in the waning light, and his heart gave a tremendous impulse. It was a narrow bow of blue ribbon!

Where is the prudence of this young man who walks so hastily the road Vic has just lately travelled? Where are his doubts? Where are his fears? What has a narrow strip of blue ribbon tied around a dog's neck to do with it?

Vic evidently knows, for he bounds along as excitedly as in his puppy days, and runs far ahead without the least uncertainty as to the road. When he reaches the long garden he runs along the path for the second time that evening without so much as a backward glance to see if he is followed. He runs up to the young lady sitting there, and sits down before her, thumps the ground with his tail, and joyously barks as one who would announce: "I have him. He's on the way."

Possibly that is the reason that the young lady, glancing up from patting the dog's neck, expresses no surprise whatever at seeing David stride up the walk, although Johnny Langston, who is his chum and ought to be posted as to his movements, gets to his feet in

great surprise, exclaiming: "Why, Dave! You told me you weren't going to get out this evening."

"Changed my mind, Johnny. Do you have to go? Don't let me keep you. I'll have Vic for company home, thanks," answered David.

He was looking for, and this time receiving his own particular welcome, getting it from laughing eyes whose saucy look spoke both challenge and forgiveness.

"What brings this scientific person to this humble spot in such great haste?" she asked, as they watched Johnny turn into the road.

He said nothing, but silently held before her the strip of ribbon.

"There'll be a great run on the ribbon counter when the girls learn that a string of narrow blue ribbon gives Mr. David Williams his cue for entrance upon the stage."

"I know one mighty good reason why they'll never know it," retorted David.

"Indeed, Mr. Positive. Possibly you don't mind telling me."

"Not in the least. It's easy and consists solely in the fact that Vic cannot talk."

"And we never will tell, will we, David?" she laughed, joyously. "I was going to be real angry with you for letting a whole month go by without coming to see me. You were to be treated a little below ordinary friendship. And then the evening came and Johnny, but not you, and I began to think of all those jolly evenings past. And Vic was nosing around as if expecting you every minute, though I felt sure you wouldn't come. So I just thought I'd try an experiment. Vic ran home right off, and Johnny didn't have a guess why I was sending him. But you'll have to explain yourself, and be very humble if you are to stay, sir."

It all seemed so simple to Elsie, apparently. Just a little matter they could easily settle. Evidently she knew nothing of Doctor Goodman's talk. David's hopes dropped as he realized this, for it left the situation just as bad as ever. He had cherished a wild hope that she had sent for him in spite of that knowledge, well though he knew the improbability. Now he put his hopes away.

"You know my explanation, Elsie," he answered rather soberly. "I tried to explain to you how inevitable it seems that I must follow my father and take up his work. You know when that time comes every one will drop me, about like a green catcher handling one of Johnny's hot ones. How can I afford to make or keep friends?"

"You are Mr. Sobersides now, David. And you are turning way over and asking me questions out of the back of the book, lots further than my class has gone. Now, I'm going to ask you to please confine yourself to the problems we are working on, and remember, that there is at least one person who believes enough in you to know that you will never do anything that will make your friends drop you."

"That's a woman's answer, Elsie; but it's your privilege to give it, and I'm glad to get it. I wish I might hear Doctor Goodman talk like that."

"That's just exactly what he says, Dave Williams; so you can just imagine you hear Doctor Goodman saying it. Don't you have any fear about my father, David."

He was thankful that she did not know.

"And how about his daughter?" he asked, lightly.

"That remains for you to find out. You are entitled to three guesses. Now, what's the first?"

"Wait till I get something to count off the petals. This flower from your hair will do. Now! 'She loves me'; 'she loves me not.' That is the way, isn't

it? This flower has so many petals it makes me all excited. Here we are: 'She loves me.' What do you think of that?"

"Think you would far better not waste your guesses in wild speculation, sir. Besides I saw you nip off two petals at once. I'll just forfeit your other two guesses for that."

"Then I stand by the original conclusion, and, it not being disputed, I take it for granted."

"You may take altogether too much for granted. They say Seniors are really as bad as Sophomores for that."

"If what 'they say' is admitted, Elsie; they say that a man who expects to get anything has to take a good deal for granted."

"I can tell you what I am willing you should take for granted."

"I listen breathlessly."

"You won't hear anything while your ears are stirred up in that flippant fashion."

"I am sober earnestness."

"You may take for granted that you are more than welcome, that an absence of the old cordial intimacy would be greatly missed, that no sensible college girl would be willing to say more, and that this is our last year in college."

"And that is more than I have any right to expect. It's like the song: 'Let us go on in the old, old way.'"

"The old, old way for you to go just as present, Mr. David, if that clock is striking true, is the way to town."

"That sounds just like the old, old way, Elsie. But I'm all obedience. There's another song you know: 'Do we say good-night in the same old way?'"

"We do, David. And we say it now. Only first I'll take my ribbon, please."

"I believe not. This ribbon is my property, retrieved by my faithful dog."

"Admitted. But you haven't any use for it, and I have."

"Well, and I have too."

"Indeed, sir. I'm just as curious as can be to know what you can do with it."

"Since it's you and no one else, I'm willing," replied David. His voice dropped its tone of badinage and the darkness covered his usual changing colour as he replied: "I'm going to put it with the other."

"The other?" exclaimed Elsie. "Why, David, you were just a child. You couldn't have cared as long ago as that." Then fearful lest too much might be inferred, she added, hastily: "I can tell you how to use them since you have a pair. They will do fine for shoe laces!"

But David, striding home, harked back to the sentiment, as he said to himself: "What if I was a child? Some children get their minds set early."

XXV

THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE

ONE may suppose that the real reason the course of true love never does run smooth is because the true lover, with an ardent belief and confidence in his own unswerving loyalty—yet, unconsciously balancing his own demerits against the unimpeachable worth of the fair object of his affections, cannot, in his humility, conceive how there can be any possible inducement for her to be equally loyal. He is as one with a prize in view so great that all men must desire it. In consequence he is suspicious of every one and everything.

For the first few weeks David shut his eyes to consequences, and his ears to the vague murmurings of conscience and enjoyed himself in a way that he had supposed would never come to him again. One of the most popular men in the most popular class, his spare time was crowded with enjoyable parties, picnics, and events of a pleasurable nature. Whenever these affairs included boys and girls alike (and most of them did), Elsie was his companion. He was sufficiently alive to his work to insist on time enough to keep even with his classes, but this did not require such a great deal, for his thorough early training had so led up to the work of the Senior year that it was not exacting.

The boys who had formerly competed with him for Elsie's favour seemed to concede his triumph. Johnny Langston had transferred his devotion to Elsie's chum, Nora. David never had considered Johnny at all seriously, but he had been a little worried by Bixby,

who, in addition to his splendid physique, possessed the great advantage of being the son of a doctor who was a close friend of Doctor Goodman. But Bixby, too, had apparently given up the race.

David, drifting along thus on the placid ocean of social contentment, was greatly surprised to receive a visit from Aunt Mercy. He found her awaiting him at Uncle Jimmy's on his return from school.

"Why, Aunt Mercy!" he exclaimed, his thoughts rapidly turning to death and disaster. "What could have brought you from home? Is Dad all right?"

"Yes, Davy," she replied. "Doc's well as usual. I come up on business, an' now I'm here, I'm goin' ter stay overnight an' see the town, which I ain't seen in many a year."

"Coming so unexpected, and knowing how seldom you leave home you gave me a scare, Aunt Mercy. I was afraid something was wrong."

"No, that ain't what I come about, Davy. Things ain't, so ter say, exac'ly wrong. Not that I'm sayin' Doc's jes' what he orter be, 'cause he ain't. The change in the ile supply worrited him consid'able, an' he ain't entirely over it, nuther. 'Pears like the ile come s'much more of it lately. I jes' left it be fer a week. He was some troubled 'bout it when he fust noticed the diff'rence, so much more'n he c'd use every day. He went roun' right glum an' quiet, wrastlin' with his trouble. Then, one day he comes home lookin' like himself agen. 'Mercy,' says he, 'I've ben give a answer. It's so simple I'd orter thought of it afore. The ile's doublin' up cause a bigger wuk is bein' put on us, 'count o' Davy bein' mos' ready ter step in yere an' help.'

"Then come the fust Sunday when I left the ile lie, an' he cert'ny did have a hard time 'bout that. Jes' es I expected, he harked back ter the destruction o' the madstone at wunst, an' fer a while he was like

he was plumb deserted. But ye know Doc's allus so trustful 'at it 'pears like he kain't be clouded over more'n 'bout so long. 'Twasn't more'n a couple o' days, he comes ter me, an' he says: 'I'm a faithless old man, Mercy. Here I've jes' had a new sign of His favour in the increased ile supply, an' yet I'm boun' ter be a-questionin' His way' cause He changes some of His 'rangements. Like es can be,' he says, 'it's done fer the same reason 'at the extry amount is sent fer. Times change an' He don't hev ter deal with me jes' the same way all the time.' This giv him lots o' comfort, an' he ain't gloomin' round the place no more like at fust, but I kin see 'at he's oneasy yet at times, an' not full satisfied."

"Would it do any good for me to come home for a while, Aunt Mercy? Perhaps I could cheer him up and make him feel better."

"I'm feared not, Davy. He might think he'd orter do a lot of explainin' ter you, an' make things wuss. Best let 'em lie. Then, too, havin' you home might make him feel wuss to Doc Goodman."

"Does he still feel sore toward him?"

"Davy," solemnly declared the old lady, "never in all my life did I know Doc ter hold a grudge 'gainst any one like he does 'gainst Doc Goodman. 'Tain't fer what he said 'bout him. 'Tain't 'cause he says the ile ain't no good. It's 'cause he's broke you up with Elsie. Doc don't admit it even ter me, mind ye. But he ain't s'much as spoke a word to Doc Goodman since you've went."

"That's bad, Aunt Mercy. Elsie and I are the best of friends now. You know I don't believe she knows a thing about Doctor Goodman coming over to see Dad."

"What cause have ye ter think that-er-way, Davy?"

David coloured in confusion. It was hard to explain.

"Why, Aunt Mercy," he managed to say, "she's too nice to me. She couldn't possibly act that way if she knew what her father had said. We've agreed practically that so long as we are both in college we'll say nothing about the serious things that come later in life—just have a good time together—but we agreed it in such a way that it's as binding to me as an engagement, and I believe it is to her. What else could she mean?"

"Davy, boy, I'm an old woman 'at never got nearer bein' married than keepin' house fer a batchelder brother, but I've kep' both eyes open mos' of my life an' I know a few things 'bout boys an' gels, too. Now, I've allus liked Elsie. I think she's an uncommon good gel. But I don't think you understan' what she means, ner I don't think she understan's what you mean. In the light o' what I know, she couldn't, es good a gel es she is. Ye see, Davy, in this yere place you're quite a pusson, or so I've ben give to understan.' Mos' any gel might be glad ter hev ye beau her roun' an' I believe that's what Elsie's thinkin' of."

"No, Aunt Mercy, you don't understand and I can't explain it to you, but it's more than that."

Truly, he could not explain; for who can put into words the glance of the eye, the pressure of the hand, the intonation of the voice, the subtle feeling that comes in gusts and waves at times and places most unexpected?

But Aunt Mercy went on, remorselessly.

"Davy, ye remember that young chap, Thornton? He was at the Inn with his ma, ye know. Well, I'd heerd of his payin' attention to Elsie 'fore she went back to school, but hadn't minded it p'ticlar. But one day last week who sh'd come ter the house but old Miss Thornton. She wanted ter see Doc, but he was out makin' calls. So after while she tells me all 'bout it. It 'pears she knows 'bout Doc's fuss with Doc

Goodman. I knowed right well she hadn't got it f'm me, ner you, ner Doc, so seems like she must o' got it f'm Doc Goodman.

"But no, she got it f'm her son, an' he got it f'm Doc Goodman. Seems like he'd ben makin' eyes at Elsie all summer, an' the night he picked on ter ask her pa if he'd be willin' he sh'd make up to her was the night Doc Goodman had ben ter see yore daddy. So the Doc out with the hull story, an' told the young man he didn't have no objection, an' fer one thing he c'd shorely count you out, an' the old lady she says Elsie knowed all about it.

"Anyway the young man had ter go back ter the city a whiles after, but he'd just wrote her that he was comin' back an' was goin' ter live yere in Lewistown a while, an' do his best to git Elsie. What the old lady was worrited 'bout: she was feared Doc'd hear of her boy bein' mixed up in it, an'd git mad at her an' not treat her no more, an' she wanted ter tell him it warn't none of her doin's."

So the story was out, and this was the real business of Aunt Mercy, no matter what she might say. David spent the evening at home with her, and they talked no more on the subject, but it was running through his mind continually.

Aunt Mercy went, early next morning. David resolved that he would ignore her information, would act as if it had never been given.

But he had scarcely made his decision when Johnny Langston came to knock it to pieces.

"You're a nice fellow, Dave," he began, with some show of indignation. "I suppose you were grinding at something or the other last night, and here, when I go over to have a few words with Nora about the straw-ride, who do I find all snugly fixed up talking to Elsie as if he owned her and had no opposition. Now, who do you suppose?"

"I suppose it was that Thornton fellow," answered David, gloomily.

"So you knew he was here, and just sat back and let him have an open field!" exclaimed Johnny. "That's worse and worse. Look here, old boy. Nora's the girl for me, and that's all settled. But when I gave Elsie up I gave her up to you, not to any Thornton chap. Now, you've got to get into things, I tell you. Study's all right, but it isn't the only thing by a long shot."

"I don't think any one ever supposed you thought it was, Johnny." Even in his gloom, David could not resist the shot.

"That's all right, old grind. Rub it into me all you want, but I'll tell you one thing sure: the man hasn't been born yet who can come and steal my girl right from under my nose."

"I don't believe any one can do so to me, either," David defended himself. "I never considered Elsie as being in such proximity, for one thing."

"Then you'd better see that she is," retorted Johnny. "I'm going to tell you another thing: this isn't the kind of a case where absence makes the heart grow fonder. You'll have to drop your grinding some and get to business."

"I was looking after Aunt Mercy, last night. She was up here on a visit."

"Then you have a good excuse, for a wonder. But don't let it happen again. You've got to look out for this chap Thornton, I tell you. Elsie's told Nora a few things that look suspicious. It seems the chap has Doctor Goodman's consent to do his best. And he's not such an unlikely fellow, to tell the truth."

Johnny left the demon of jealousy just lighting up in David's breast. This seemed to bear out Aunt Mercy's story just enough to be suspicious, and sus-

picion is the particular type of fuel which is most effective in promoting the blaze.

Everything happened at once that day. David had scarcely reached town before he saw crossing the street, to meet him, the figure of young Thornton.

He came toward David with outstretched hand, as if they were the best of friends.

"I have been watching for you, David," he said, quietly, as their hands met. "I was told that you would come this way. It seems no trouble to get information about 'Williams' in this town."

David ignored the implied flattery.

"I understood that you were here," he said. And then, with the abruptness of a boy, his customary shrewdness swallowed up in his jealousy, "Do you mind telling me on what business you came?"

The older man smiled: "I am afraid that my business is of too confidential a nature to tell even to an old friend, David, for the present. I'm sure you will excuse me."

"Certainly, if it is secret. I should not have asked," apologized David, having so far recovered himself.

"I hope to see more or less of you while I am here, David," Thornton said, genially.

"I will try to see that you do," returned David, in a tone of some determination. "If at all possible, more."

"That will be fine, David."

He passed on. David walked on to college impressed with his striking pose, finely cut clothing, and general air of good breeding; and depressed also that his rival should have such advantages. It was not for him to know that at the same time Thornton was thinking: "A college king! The same class, the same crowd, the same associates! An athletic hero! An idol of the school! If I get anything away from him with all the advantage he has, I must certainly fight for it."

David worried through the day, with his mind filled with a thousand problems foreign to the curriculum. Johnny's information from Nora made it quite clear that Elsie knew that Thornton had interviewed Doctor Goodman. Did she also know of Doctor Goodman's interview with his father? Could it be that Aunt Mercy was right in thinking that she knew all about the matter; knew the impossibility of her father consenting to an engagement, but was glad to have a good time with him for the college year, and let it end at that? Was that what she meant when she spoke of the limitations of a sensible college girl?

The straw-ride referred to by Johnny was the entertainment of that evening. David called for Elsie in a rather mixed state of mind. He was trying to be loyal, yet suspicious in spite of himself. He was trying to trust, yet unable to forget the facts. He resolved to say nothing of Thornton. He would give her a chance to introduce the subject.

When one relies for a greeting upon telepathic glances, one must not forget that telepathy, like telegraphy, requires for the correct transmission of a message a normal condition of currents and instruments. David failed to consider this, and so there was an error to start with. A straw-ride is not an occasion to encourage confidences and give opportunities for the quiet talk needed for the clearing away of misunderstandings, at its very best. This particular straw-ride was at its very worst—an assemblage of young reactionaries, shouting in wild release from the quiet of the classroom. When the ride ended David knew that Elsie had some reason for feeling a little neglected. They walked home rather quietly, talking the merest commonplaces. Johnny and Nora obligingly sought the other end of the garden, but still there was no word of the subject weighing heavily on both their minds.

"You are not very bright this evening," Elsie remarked, finally.

Then it came. David's good sense had evidently left him entirely in this matter. "You had better company last evening," he taunted.

Elsie flushed. "I supposed Johnny would tell you. Why have you waited so long to speak of it?" She felt just guilty enough to be a little quarrelsome herself.

"I waited for you to mention it first," he retorted. "I felt that it should come from you."

"If you mean that I should apologize, I want you to understand that Mr. Thornton came as a friend of my father's," replied Elsie, a little sting in her tones.

"And with your father's full consent to take you. And if so, why do you play with me?"

He put his question in a flare of anger, and it was in anger, though kept out of her voice, that she replied.

"You presume on our old friendship altogether too much, David Williams. I do not remember that I ever gave you any privileges that would give you a right to say such things to me."

But this did not cool David. He rarely lost his temper, but when it happened, he lost it very completely.

"No, you took mighty good care not to give any privileges of any kind, Miss Elsie. It was for me to give, you to take."

But Elsie was gone. David went tearing down the path, overriding Johnny and Nora, who would have tried to turn him back; and out into the country he tramped, a recreation which had not fallen to his lot for years. When he reached home late at night the only conclusion he had reached was that he had made a fool of himself again, but how to remedy the matter he saw not.

He went up to college the next morning so brooding over his troubles that he failed to notice any undue

excitement among the little groups on the campus, until one of his friends addressed him: "We must do something for Curry, Williams. He's in our class and our society. We certainly can't let him lie there without attendance. If there's no nurse here who will wait on him, we must send to the city."

"What for?" asked David, awaking to interest. "What's the matter with Curry?"

"Hadn't you heard? I supposed every one knew. He's been sick two or three days, and last night the doctor declared it diphtheria, the worst kind. All the nurses in town are busy, and so far we haven't been able to get any one to attend him. Any number of us feel willing to go, but one thing or another prevents. Most of us know nothing of nursing. None of us can afford to lose the long time we'd have to be in quarantine."

"Where is he?" asked David. "At his boarding-house?"

"Yes, he's in his room on Main Street."

"All right," replied David, coolly. "I can nurse fine. I'm going in to take care of him. If you can get a nurse from the city maybe I'll be able to get out again soon. So long."

XXVI

DAVID IN A NEW RÔLE

DAVID had no great knowledge of diphtheria, but with general nursing he was quite familiar. It was a common thing with the old doctor, when finding a neglected case, to stay with the patient long enough to see to his general comfort and cleanliness, and he had frequently sent David to stay with a case a day or two at a time. With a vague idea that his clothing might have to be burned, David went back to Uncle Jimmy's and put on his oldest clothes. Then he went over and knocked at the door of Curry's boarding-house, ignoring the big sign, "Diphtheria," which flared out at him.

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Williams," snapped the landlady, Mrs. Hamand—accented by herself on the first syllable, but by the students on the "and." "I'm sure I'm glad somebody's got a little sense of duty. Here's this young man down sick in my house, all my boarders left as soon as they suspected anything, and gone goodness knows where—likely never will come back here—and me left all alone to do everything, cook and housekeeper and nurse and everything else. Mr. Curry's sick as can be, and if he gets well it will be weeks before the quarantine is took off, and even if he dies, I'll be shut up for days yet. I'm sure I don't see why there isn't a hospital to send such cases to."

"Hard luck, Mrs. Hamand," commented David. "It's a little harder on Curry than on you, though, don't you think?"

"You needn't talk as if I wasn't sorry for Mr. Curry, now, Mr. Williams. I was just like a mother

to that boy, I was indeed. Here I'd doctored him for three days and couldn't see that he was much worse, only he thought it was getting hard for him to breathe, and then he has to go and insist on getting a doctor last night, and what does he do but go and report the case as diphtheria, and gets the house quarantined, such foolishness! As if it wasn't hard enough to make a living nowadays, without that."

"I suppose the doctor did what he thought was right," defended David.

But the old lady knew her wrongs and was not easily pacified. "What he thought! What right's he got to think so much more'n anybody else? Why haven't I a right to think, too? Here I said to him: 'Now, Doctor, we've called you in just to satisfy this boy, and we want you just to give him a little something to relieve this hard breathing, which my remedies don't seem to help, and then I'll take care of him again. We don't want you to go reporting this case or anything.' Do you think he'd listen to me? Not for a minute. Insulted me by saying the boy had had about enough of my doctoring already, and I'd laid myself liable to arrest for concealing a case of contagious disease. Now. you wonder I'm mad, after all I done for that boy, and me trying to keep the thing quiet so not to discommode my boarders by making them all move. Anyway, I got ahead of the old doctor one way, for the boarders all moved out before he put his old sign up."

"What did the doctor think about Curry's condition?" David asked, ignoring the bundle of complaints.

"Oh, he wants to make out he's awful sick. Talks about a consultation and antitoxin. Wants to run up as big a bill as he he can, I guess. You know this antitoxin is five dollars a dose, and I guess the doctor gets about four and a half of it."

David chose to ignore her jibes.

"When's the doctor coming back?" he asked.

"He said he'd look in at noon," she replied. "Trust him to make as many visits as he can. You needn't be afraid he won't come often enough."

"Well, I'll go up and see what Curry wants," David remarked, as a faint knocking was heard. He caught one parting complaint as he climbed the stairs: "I suppose you'll be coming down with it next, and this boarding-house will have to stay in quarantine until you get well or die, too."

Curry looked up with a joyous recognition, which changed suddenly to apprehension.

"Why, Dave!" he cried, in a husky voice; "I'm awfully glad to see you. But you must hustle right out. Mrs. Hamand ought to have told you. I've got diphtheria."

"That's all right, old boy. I know all about it. I've come to take care of you. Now, what is it? A drink?"

"I'm just dying for one," Curry admitted.

"No good drinking this stuff. I'll get some right fresh and cool. Then I'll come back and fix you up."

Inside the next hour David had cooled the boy with a sponge bath and drinks, had managed to beguile Mrs. Hamand into giving up some fresh linen, and spread it on the bed, had cleared away a clutter of dirty bottles and glasses, drawn one shade, raised another, opened both windows wide, and added so much to the peace of mind of his friend that he was resting quietly. though not asleep.

The doctor did not come at noon, after all, and David, who was distressed by a feeling that his friend was not doing well, went anxiously to the door to look for him.

"Now, come away from that door, Mr. Williams," objected Mrs. Hamand. "You needn't be afraid for

that doctor. He'll come all right, and he'll get away again, too. But if you stand there poking your nose in the street, we'll all get arrested for breaking quarantine."

"I've often wondered what doctors do to keep from carrying disease," David innocently admitted.

"Do? They don't do a thing," indignantly stated Mrs. Hamand. "The only reason doctors don't carry diseases and common folks like us do, is because doctors are so miserable mean that the disease bugs can't live on 'em!"

"You don't seem to like doctors?" David laughingly questioned.

"Which I'll freely admit it," replied Mrs. Hamand. "I always used to be a good friend to them, too. I ran an account with Doctor Jones for seven years, and when I had a little money that I could really think I had no other use for, I paid him a dollar or two. Then he saw I was doing pretty well, and got greedy and said he wanted the whole account settled—after seven years' acquaintance, mind you. And I declare, if he didn't get a judgment against me for thirty-three dollars—me that had had him in the house as friendly as could be whenever a doctor was wanted—night or day—for seven years. Yes, and I had to pay it, too."

The pathos in the last sentence was too much for David's sense of humour, and he felt that he must laugh—disastrous though he knew it would be—but he was saved by the arrival of the doctor.

The doctor carried, in addition to his medicine case, a large bag. This he set down on the porch and drew from it a garment which covered him from head to foot. David cast a pleasant smile in Mrs. Hamand's direction, but she made no sign of approval.

"I'm glad you are here, Williams," the doctor greeted him. "Curry needed some one to put a little heart into him. He's a pretty sick boy."

David followed him upstairs and watched his examination.

"It's no good for me to discuss this with you, Curry," said the doctor, as he finished. "You're too sick just now to have to turn things over in your head. If you're willing, I'll talk with Williams, and he'll decide for you. We're going to do something to get you right up and out of this. You've lain here long enough."

"Whatever you and Dave decide," agreed Curry, in a hoarse whisper.

"You can see for yourself," explained the doctor, as they stepped into the hall, "that your friend is in quite a bad way. Do you know anything about diphtheria?"

"Only that it's considered mighty dangerous," said David.

There had never been any diphtheria at Latham Corners in his time. He remembered, back in the early days, when a faint alarm had stirred the neighbourhood, how the old doctor, in his morning prayer, had added to his customary: "Lord, let no plague come nigh this habitation," the earnest words: "ner no dipthery, Lord"; and how Aunt Mercy, in a surprising departure from her usual quiet, had broken out with a pleading: "Nowhere's near nigh, Lord." Afterwards she had explained to him how fearful had been the diphtheria of a couple of years before, when the doctor had lost almost half his little patients in spite of the oil, and had been so crushed that he almost lost faith, his only consolation being the fact that Doctor Goodman lost still more.

So, in David's mind, diphtheria had always been one of the dread diseases.

"It is dangerous, Williams; mighty dangerous, as you say. And Curry has a bad attack. It seems to be involving the larynx; that is what makes his breath-

ing so difficult. The case calls for special care, and I would like permission to call counsel. Do you know where Curry's people can be reached?"

"He has no one but an invalid mother. Unless he is very dangerously ill, it would hardly be a good thing to call on her. They are fairly well fixed, so I don't think you need stand at expense; anyway, his college society will guarantee that."

"It isn't entirely a matter of expense. It's a matter of using methods that as yet are hardly common enough to be considered regular practice; at least, they aren't with me. I have always had very good success in treating diphtheria with the remedies indicated by the totality of the symptoms. But while that has worked fine in my regular cases, which I take hold of at the start, it doesn't seem to be doing so in this, which had already run to a bad condition before I saw it. Now, I need counsel, anyway, because if he gets choked up much worse we must be prepared to slip a tube down his throat, or possibly to open the trachea, and it isn't any one man's job, if help can be got. But I have a friend in the city who has been using this new treatment by antitoxin for a year or two. He was always considered successful, even when he relied on symptomatic remedies as I do, but he tells me that he has had much greater success since, and especially in desperate cases. Now, this is a desperate case, and I'd like to get permission to send for him."

"Go ahead, by all means," urged David. "I can give you as much permission as you can get from any one, and I'll give you all you want. Get anything you need, or anybody you want. When can your friend get here?"

"If I have good luck reaching him by 'phone, he ought to get the one o'clock surburban, and be out here by two-fifteen."

"Well, the 'phone's right here at the foot of the stairs. Let's get right at it."

Fortunately the city doctor was in—just finishing his lunch. Yes, he would put some stuff in his bag and get right out there.

He was as good as his word. In a short time he was at Curry's bedside. As the serum was not then (as at present) in the hands of every druggist, the doctor had brought a supply with him from the city to make sure.

"We may have to intubate or even do a tracheotomy," calmly announced the consultant, these being with him little matters of every-day practice; "but anyway, we'll try the antitoxin first."

Mrs. Hamand so far overcame her antipathy to doctors as to furnish clean towels and boiling water, in as docile a way as could be desired, and the little operation was soon concluded.

"We should have some improvement in from six to eight hours," the consultant stated. "I will come back at nine o'clock this evening, and Doctor Evans will look in as soon as he can."

David went with the doctors to the door. Doctor Evans' buggy was there, and he drove away, but the city doctor would not get a car for some little time. It was a nasty, drizzling afternoon. David invited the doctor into the parlour, but with an inward dread lest the voluble Mrs. Hamand should turn loose her artillery. He was prepared to quiet her if she became too offensive, but unfortunately an insistent call from above sounded, and he was compelled to leave the doctor in the parlour unprotected. As soon as possible he returned. Even before he started downstairs he could hear the dulcet tones of the landlady, and he coloured hotly as he thought of the insults which she might be putting upon the doctor.

At the threshold he stood and listened. The voice was amazingly modified.

"It never has seemed to me, Doctor," Mrs. Hamand was saying, "that these doctors here in town just understood my case. I need a good sympathetic man, who will go into my case thoroughly and let me explain just how I feel. There was one doctor came here I thought was going to help me. He was certainly fitted up with splendid equipment. I went to him for free examination, and he seemed to understand me right off. You see, Doctor, I was raised a pet, and I have one of these sensitive natures that just have to be understood to be appreciated. Well, as soon as I got seated in the waiting-room, and saw the seven different diplomas he had hung around, in just the most elegant frames you ever did see, I felt that he was going to be able to help me. Then, after I'd waited quite a while, he took me into the most beautiful office, and made such a thorough examination, I almost blush to speak about it, but you, being a doctor, understand, and I can say it to you, who knows how necessary it was. And he told me frankly what the trouble was. He said I had general perotizrites.

"There was one thing I had often told the other doctors, and got nothing but a grin for my pains. I decided he ought to know, so I finally told him I had always feared I was liver-grown. He was just as sympathetic as could be, and assured me that it was really the cause of all my trouble, and the general perotizrites had set in from that. He had the most wonderful lot of instruments all around his office everywhere, and he showed me the one he proposed to use on me. It was run by electricity, and rubbing it over where I was liver-grown, at the same time placing his hand on my positive pole, would set things to circulating inside me and would make me a well woman. I was to go every other day for a month, which would

be fifteen times, and the treatment was ordinarily two dollars each time, but he was going to give me the entire month's treatment for twenty-five dollars on account of my paying in advance. He said he had often noticed that patients got more good out of treatment that was paid for in advance. But, do you know, when I went up for my first treatment he had gone. These jealous doctors here run him out of town because they were afraid he'd ruin their business!"

"Well, that was certainly too bad!" There was undoubtedly sympathy in the tones of this doctor. "Your doctor must have been a smart man. I've often found it as he says, that treatment paid in advance is much more efficacious. You try that with some of your town doctors, and see if they won't do better."

"They're a grasping lot," sighed the lady. "Maybe they would take a little more interest if they saw the money, first. But, Doctor, what do you really think is the matter with me, and do you mind looking at this place on my right limb and seeing if it's anything to do with the perotizrites?"

"I'm afraid my car is about due, Mrs. Hamand," said the doctor, and David could hear him rising from his chair. "You know I'm a throat specialist, and perotizrites isn't in my line. I think you have possibly an incipient hypertrophy of the transverse lingualis muscle, with a probable enlargement of the suprahyoid glands, but I believe nothing that calls for special treatment in my line. If you decide to take treatment from a home doctor, tell him to call me on the 'phone, and I shall be glad to give him my opinion."

David held the door open as the doctor ran for his car, and he was quite sure that the merry chuckle he heard was not due to anything connected with Curry's case.

A doctor is the best man on earth to laugh *with* a

patient, but seldom does he laugh *at* him. He is not readily amused by ignorance of medical terms; he is not easily tickled by hysterical symptoms, for he knows how real they are to the patient. But if there is one person who provokes his honest mirth it is that clever one who is too smart to accept genuine service, yet falls a victim to the merest quack.

XXVII

DOC NEEDS DAVID'S HELP

"CURRY is over the worst of it, now," said the specialist to David, for whom he had formed a great liking. "He still needs careful attention and will for some time, but we have a good nurse now, and you can be excused."

"All right, sir. I am glad to get back to my classes," responded David.

"I'm not so sure that you can do that yet, David. We'll have to speak to Doctor Evans about it. You know boards of health are extra particular about schools. Their usual regulation is that any one exposed to diphtheria must stay out three weeks. The only way I can see for you to get back earlier is for me to give you an immunizing dose of antitoxin."

"I haven't any prejudice against antitoxin, Doctor, but my father has, I'm quite sure; so I can't take it. What difference would it make about my going back to school?"

"Just this, David. You have been exposed to diphtheria. So far as your clothes and person are concerned, we can disinfect you, and we can take a swab of your throat for microscopical examination to show whether your throat is clear now. But the danger is that some time in the next week or two the disease may so develop in your system that you will, in yourself, be a source of contagion. This might occur while you still felt well enough to be in your classes, and so you might spread the disease. But the board of health believes antitoxin has power to nip the disease in the bud. So if you take the antitoxin they will consider you

safe. Otherwise you will probably have to stay out of school three weeks to make quite sure the disease is not going to develop."

"Well, sir, I hate to be out of school just now, but I don't see how I can take the antitoxin."

"I am sorry, David. Wouldn't it help if I explained to you the theory of antitoxin and showed how we know it to be a specific?"

"It wouldn't make any difference about my taking it, Doctor, because it isn't my mind, but Dad's, that would have to be changed. But if you can spare the time, I'd like first-rate to hear the theory."

It was the doctor's busy morning, but he felt the value of reaching this bright young man, and deliberately let his car go by while he dealt with the theory, development, manufacture, and use of anti-diphtheritic serum in the treatment of diphtheria.

"It is wonderful," commented David. "It must be a great thing to take away the terrors of such a disease."

"It is a great thing, David. Still it would be too much to say that diphtheria is robbed of all its terrors."

"It doesn't cure every case, then?"

"No! It has reduced the mortality in a striking way, but there are some few cases in which it seems to have little or no effect. Indeed, a few instances are recorded where some idiosyncrasy of the patient has made the antitoxin itself prove poisonous, so that the very thing which is given to save has, in a few cases, become an agent of death. The cases on record in which it has proved unsafe are not one in a hundred thousand, though, whereas, in multitudinous cases, it has saved life where all else failed, and shortened the course of the disease from weeks to days. I'm sorry there are any dangerous cases, few though they be. I

know good, conscientious doctors, who are still deterred from using this valuable agent by these few fatalities. I myself held back for a long time, but the theory of the greatest good to the greatest number prevailed with me a couple of years ago, and while I had fair success before, it is far greater now."

"Doctor, I am mighty grateful to you for spending your time explaining these things to me, although it doesn't help me out of my fix. It seems a little cheeky, perhaps, for me to venture an opinion, but, anyway, I don't believe the theory applies nearly so well to immunizing as it does to curing."

The doctor laughed. "There are many good men, strong believers in antitoxin, who agree with you in that, David. But we won't discuss it. Think it over, and if you change your mind by evening let me know, and I will give you the immunizing dose."

But in a thing which entailed opposition to the views of his father there was no probability of David changing his mind. In the afternoon Doctor Evans superintended his disinfection and announced that he might go anywhere but to school.

"Of course you will put yourself under treatment at once if you get sick, Williams. If you don't, you can enter school again in three weeks."

The problem of how to spend his time was settled for him when he reached Uncle Jimmy's, by a letter from Aunt Mercy. The old lady seldom undertook the arduous task of letter-writing. When she did every word was carefully spelled out of the dictionary, so that her letters were far more correct than her speech.

"We are in great calamity, Davy," she wrote. "The awful diphtheria has come again. Doc has been going day and night. He would not like me to say it, but if you was home so you could drive for him, it would

help a lot. He has lost three cases. They always goes in threes, so maybe he will not lose no more, which we certainly do hope and pray. Do what you think is best, Davy. Doc, he would not hear to you a-coming home, so if you should feel to come, it must be for something or other else."

David knew what he must do. It would have been the same whether quarantined or not.

There was still an hour or two before train-time. No one but Uncle Jimmy and Vic knew that he was released.

It was a beautiful evening. Vic was teasing him for a walk. Perhaps if he went to the gate she would give him a chance to explain why he had made such a fool of himself. Perhaps she would tell him that he wasn't such a fool, after all. He had been hasty. Probably she didn't care for Thornton a bit, and she might be willing to say so if he asked her in the right way at the right time. He thought he could tell when that right time would be, and his imagination painted a very pleasant picture of a most affecting reconciliation, with a barely admitted thought that it might be in some degree a sort of a reward for heroism.

He was travelling very swiftly, both in his mind and his stride; not by any means the leisurely stroll he had set out to take. He was in a hurry. He wanted this suspense ended. If it would not have looked ridiculous, he could have kept pace with Vic, who bounded away ahead. As it happened Vic ran before in plenty of time to announce him, but unfortunately the announcement was not understood, because Vic's expressive tail was unable to convey to the young lady information of the release from quarantine.

And so when he stood at the gate, it was only a brief second before he stepped again into the shadow of the hedge. The picture was not as imagined. The dog was there and the girl's caressing arm was around his

neck, but the animated face and vivacious manner were directed to the disturbing Mr. Thornton.

Poor boy! It was not given to him to know that the animation and vivacity were inspired by her interest in the subject of her recital—a story of the heroism of the man who sacrificed his precious days in college for his friend.

And she, poor girl, so animated by the subject, did not chance to look at the gate, so never knew of the visit; and when the next day brought news of the release from quarantine and journey home, could feel only resentment that he should be so selfish as to go without a word.

Between the various combinations of circumstances Mr. Thornton's chances were receiving quite a boom.

It was late at night when David reached home. Lights were burning in the little sitting-room. He stepped quietly in, and found Aunt Mercy answering the telephone, an innovation which had come with the new Inn.

"No," she was saying, in the disconnected fashion of telephone talk, "Doc ain't to home. Are ye plumb sure ye kain't git along till morning? How long's he ben sick? Well, I kain't say when he'll be yere. Davy's yere. How'd he do? Well, I b'leeve he'll come."

She turned around to David.

"Ye see, boy, I'm makin' work fer ye, fust off. It's old Sam Enter, down by the tracks. He hurted hisself three days back an' he's jes' found out 'at he has ter hev a doctor immej'ut. It's plumb aggervatin' the way some of 'em does. They waits an' waits till long past decent folks's bed-hour, then somep'n mus' be done fer 'em immej'ut. Then Doc goes, an' more'n likely finds they c'd jes' as well waited till sun-up, an' things wouldn't ben no wuss. Times I tells Doc he didn't orter go, but he's that sot, he's boun' ter do it.

He says: ' S'pose'n they was really sick, Mercy,' an', of course, there ain't no answer."

" But, Aunt Mercy, what's the good of sending me to these people? Of course, I'm glad to go if it will save Dad going out again when he gets home; but what can I do for them? "

" Davy, when you was a little feller, fust come, ye was allus handy about fixin' the hurtin's of the little chaps. Now ye're a man growed an' hev all kinds o' books in yore head it'd cert'ny be a pity ef ye warn't good enough ter fix up a old wreck like Sam Enter. Why, Davy, he ain't wuth Doc goin' six steps fer him on a fine summer day, but ef he comes home an' I tell him, he'd go ef it's gone midnight an' a-blizzardin' like forty. An' I tell you, Davy, he's nigh wore out—ye never see him so wore out—an' we've got to help him some way—me an' you—or we ain't no good fer nuthin', neither of us."

There were tears in her eyes as she finished, that matched oddly enough the note of fierceness in her voice. Davy had rarely seen her so affected. He gathered together a few things that he thought might be of service, and strode through the darkness to Sam Enter's shack by the tracks.

Surely it was more than coincidence that this should be almost on the spot where the old doctor had picked him up years ago. It brought his obligations fresh to his mind, and he vowed that no petty qualms and no selfish desires should hinder him now from proving to his benefactor that he had raised up a man.

There were no alarming signs of sickness in the Enter household. The old man and his wife sat nodding over the fire, while the grown daughter was busy about some work in the kitchen. They roused at his entrance.

" Evenin', Davy," grunted the old man.

The mother and daughter, apparently inspired to the

same jocularity, reproved him: "You'd orter say Doctor Williams, paw."

David went through his old trick of blushing and hastened to disclaim the title with a vigorous refutation. Rather than that he was willing to accept the salutation of the son, an old schoolmate, who, from an adjoining room, shouted: "Hello, there, Quack!"

"We wasn't noways sure you was comin,' Davy," explained the old woman. "We was thinkin' of sendin' over to the station ter telephone fer Doc Milligan over to the valley. Ye see Pap hurted hisself most a week ago, an' we fixed him up 'bout like common. Pap put a nice fresh chaw of 'baccy on it ter kill the pisen, and then I kivered it up with a slice er fat bacon ter keep out infermation. It hurted some tonight, an' Bill Jacobs, he come in, an' he'd jes' read in the paper where a man got blood pisen an' had ter hev his leg ampertated, an' he brung the paper an' we all read it, so we knowed at wunst somep'n mus' be done. We called Doc Goodman, an' he was out, then we called your daddy, an' he was out, an' Aunt Mercy said she'd send you."

David removed the dirty dressing with a feeling of disgust he found difficult to repress. He called for some warm water and carefully but thoroughly cleansed the wound.

"Feels better already, doesn't it?" he asked the old man.

"It do, Davy. That stuff you put in that water is mos' powerful healin'. I c'd feel it plumb inter me marrer."

As the only thing in the water was a little soap, David felt quite gratified and a trifle amused.

"That isn't going to make any trouble if you wash it in clear water once a day, and put nothing else on it,' announced David, confidently. "You need have no fear of blood-poison."

"Air ye right sure o' that, now, Davy?" questioned the old man. "This here blood pisen is somep'n I wouldn't want ye ter make no mistake about. Less'n ye're dead sure, I believe we'll jes' call Doc Milligan ter come. He's mebbe home. Ef he couldn't come, they was a town doc come here ter see Sheriff Wiles last week. He's got one of these here new devil-wagons, they calls 'em, an' he come the hull twenty-seven mile in a bit more'n a hour. We c'd mebbe git him."

"But, Sam," asked David, aghast at this recklessness, "have you thought what it would cost to bring Doctor Milligan here nine miles, or the city doctor twenty-seven miles. Who's going to pay for it?"

"Now, Davy, I shorely am s'prised 'at yore ign'rance about doctors. When a doctor gits a call he must go or he's li'ble to arrest. That's the law, or if 'tain't it orter be. They don't ask if ye're rich or poor. They jes' go. I've never had no money fer doctor bills. They's too many things 'at ye jes' kain't get without money ter use it that-er-way. If the doc comes f'm the city 'twon't cost nuthin' fer a pore chap like me, so why shouldn't I hev him come? I declare I'd do it yit, on'y the 'phone man wants fifteen cents toll."

"Sam, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," declared David, indignantly. "You know very well there isn't anything much the matter with you. You could wait till morning and then go afoot and see a doctor, and take only a few minutes of his time. And yet you would bring a man here twenty-seven miles, if it wasn't that you would have to pay fifteen cents 'phone toll, cash in advance."

If David expected the old man to be humiliated, he was greatly mistaken.

"That's the trouble, Davy," he admitted. "It's cash in advance." And then as if struck by a happy

thought: " S'pos'n you call him up fer me? Yer daddy would."

David's reply was to gather his things together and stride indignantly out. As the door closed, he heard the old man say: " He shore ain't like old Doc," and when he reached home he found they had already put in another call for the old doctor.

XXVIII

A COUNTRY DOCTOR

DAVID did not see the doctor until the following day.

"He's wukkin' most awful hard," Aunt Mercy explained. "Jest goin' night an' day. He stan's up ter it putty well, but he ain't jes' like hisself. He ain't never ben sence he had that turn up with Doc Goodman. They don't never speak when they pass, an' I know it weighs heavy on Doc. I never knowed him ter hold a grudge afore, an' I know he ain't happy like common."

"It certainly is unusual for Dad to carry a grudge," said David. "I wish we could clear it up."

"They don't seem no great chanct, Davy. An' this dipthery makes it wuss'n ever. You see, Doc Goodman he ain't lost a case so far. He's a-usin' this yer new anty stuff that ye've heard tell of, an' Doc says it's pisen, an' if they gets over the dipthery, they'll have a wuss pisen in 'em 'slong es they live. But Doc Goodman ain't lost no cases, though his treatment did leave little Ab Kent palsied f'm his waist down. The Kent childern all had it, an' all of 'em's well but little Ab, but Bill Kent's bill fer the stuff alone is nigh fifty dollars. Still it won't do him no harm ter pay it, an' ef it really done the childern good he didn't orter grudge it. But Doc says it jes' happened, though I mus' say I never knowed a time afore when he'd talk that-er-way of what another doctor done."

David said nothing of his own experience with antitoxin.

The doctor came home at noon. He looked old and

tired, as Aunt Mercy had said. But his face lighted up with pleasure as he looked at his boy.

"It cert'ny does me good ter see ye, Davy, boy," was his affectionate greeting. "Come home to stay with yore old daddy a while, hev ye, boy? It'll sure rest me jes' ter hev ye aroun', ye understan' me."

"Yes, Dad, I'm going to stay till you get over this heavy work. If I can't do anything else I'll take care of the horses like I did years ago when you had old Grey. If you're going out again after dinner, I'll have Belle ready for you. She's done nothing to-day."

Belle was a big bay, capable of hard work, of which lately she had plenty. The doctor kept two horses now, and Belle was considered David's particular property when he was at home.

As they drove out that afternoon David amused the doctor with an account of Sam Enter's blood-poisoning.

"Sam cert'ny is a case," chuckled the old man. "He's in a class by hisself, Sam is. One time a doctor sent a c'lector with a bill an' Sam was thet put out he up an' said he'd never give him no more patternage 'slong es he lived. One thing 'bout Sam he don't play no fav'rites, ye understan' me. He's jes' li'ble ter call one as tuther, so we gets it kinder divided up an' 'tain't so hard on any one of us."

"I don't see why you pay any attention to him when you're so busy with real sickness," said David, a touch of indignation in his voice.

"Now, Davy, ye mustn't git thinkin' like them folks at the Inn, ye know. They's only two or three left now, but they was here until last week, an' I was gettin' putty busy with our folks bein' sick, an' I had long rides, an' I didn't have hardly no time at all for them folks down there, ye understan' me. One old lady, she says to me, she says: 'Doctor, seems ter me yo're very foolish ter make sech long rides an' do sech hard

wuk when ye c'd make a lot more money if ye'd jes' stay an' give proper 'tention to us folks at the Inn,' she says. Well, I didn't tell her nuthin'; t'ain't no use tryin' ter explain sech things ter some people, ye understan' me. But I don't want you to git no sech idees, Davy, boy."

"I don't mean that, Dad, and you know I don't. Still, I've often thought you ought to give up this country driving. It's mighty hard work."

"In a way it is, Davy, but it has its compensations. It cert'ny has its compensations," mused the old man. "They ain't many like old Sam, Davy. Most on 'em thinks nuthin's too good fer Doc. Seems putty hard jest 'bout supper-time when ye feel like settlin' down fer a quiet evenin', ter git called way out, like las' night. Ye git out in the early dark an' mebbe it's muddy and heavy, an' ye know 'at Belle mustn't be crowded along none. The rain spits in yore face a bit, but ye don't mind s'much after ye git goin' wunst, on'y when the mare plunks inter a soft place an' the mud—the stingy kind—splashes inter yore eye, an' it smarts quite some fer a whiles. But the mare's doin' the wuk, mind ye, an' you pull up the old robe an' jes' set still. Ye run past Collins' place jest as Bill's goin' up f'm the barn, and he knows ye in the dark an' hollers: 'Hello, Doc, who's sick out this way?' Of co'se he don't expect no answer, ye understan' me. Then ye rattle cros't the bridge, mighty glad it's fixed, 'cause ye can hear the crik jest a-roarin' along.

"As ye git on, the houses begin to git dark an' ye know the folks has turned in fer the night mos'ly, 'cept'n when ye go by the Carters' where the gels is gener'ly up putty late with their beaus, an' along by old man Morgan's, who kain't never git no sleep till midnight along of his asthmy. But ye know they's quite a bit ter go yet, an' the culvert's out at the Big Bend, an' ye hev ter git out an' foot it round with the

lantern, an' when ye climbs back in ye begin ter feel cold an' tired, an' the rain 'pears ter beat in a trifle more.

"An' jest then ye tops the hill an' ye can see Timken's place way off, every winder lighted up fer ye. An' as ye git along thet way ye kin see a light down by the gate, an' ye know young Bob's down there stompin' his feet ter keep warm, ben waitin' ever sence they was any chanct fer ye to be comin' along. An' Big Tom comes chasin' out an' gits a holt of Belle: 'Now, Doc,' he says, 'you git right inter the kitchen, where we got a good fire, an' Maw has some coffee waitin', an' I'll put the mare up all right, don't ye never fear.' Then ye steps into the warm, light kitchen, an' Susie comes up to tek yer hat an' coat, an' Miss Timken says: 'Now, childern, git out o' Doc's way an' make room up ter the stove, so's he kin git warm. Put yore feet right inter the oven, Doc, an' drink this coffee. It's a plumb shame ter call ye out to-night, but little Bill's our baby, ye know, an' with this big lot of childern, we're so skeert of this yere dipthery we jes' couldn't wait till mornin'.'

"An' then, after a bit, ye looks at the baby's throat an' ye tell 'em he ain't got no dipthery, an' they is so much rej'icin' it makes ye think of the angels rej'icin' up yonder. Then ye stay a whiles longer fer a little visit, an' Miss Timken tries ter git ye ter stay all night, but less'n it's putty bad ye'd ruther not. An' the storm has cleared an' the stars is bright, so Timken hands ye a bill, 'cause they allus pay as they go, an' the boy brings yore rig an' ye start off inter a diff'runt kind o' night.

"Ye've read of the quiet hills, but ye don't know much about it till ye trip along in the middle night, the sky blazin' with stars, a still night an' most everybody asleep, even the dawgs. Ye lay back in yer seat an' yore face turns up to heaven, an' ye think how

clos't it seems, an' ye see strange forms an' shapes floatin' there, an' sometimes ye see clear in. Then ye think of stars fer yore crown, mebbe, an' ye laughs to yoreself ter think anybody'd want to dodge this. Why, Davy, boy, there ain't nuthin' wuth havin' ever comes f'm layin' round."

"That's all right, Dad, I like to hear you talk that way. But how about the nights when it doesn't clear up, but the storm keeps getting worse, and the cases where there isn't any rejoicing, because the child really does have diphtheria, and the shacks where there's no fire in the stove and no welcome for the doctor? I know it happens often enough."

"A body mus' take the bitter with the sweet, Davy. No kind of life is all sunshine. But they's as much of it fer the doctor as any one gits, ye understan' me."

They made quite a round of visits that afternoon. David would have been glad to stay out in the buggy, but in several cases the old doctor insisted on his seeing the patient.

"They're expectin' ye'll take my place some day, boy. They'll be right glad to see ye," explained the old man, and reluctantly David consented.

They got safely back home by night, and for once it seemed likely that the old doctor would get a good night's rest. Aunt Mercy saw that he went to bed early. Then she came back to the sitting-room, where David was reading.

"Now, Davy," she said. "Doc orter hev one good night, anyway. Now, if that 'phone rings. you answer it, an' make 'em stan' over till mornin'."

Aunt Mercy showed a spirit of divination in this, for she had scarcely spoken before the bell rang. David put the receiver to his ear.

"This is Bennet talking," he heard. "We aren't just satisfied with Mrs. Bennet's condition, and we'd

like the doctor to come back to see her again this evening. Hope it isn't too late."

"Doctor has gone to bed early to try to catch up on his sleep," answered David. "You know I was with the doctor this afternoon when he called, and that isn't more than a few hours ago. Won't you try to wait until morning?"

The Bennets were educated, reasonable people, among the best in the neighbourhood.

"We don't want to be unreasonable," came the response. "But we're scared about Mrs. Bennet's pulse —it's a hundred and twenty. I hate to get the old doctor up; suppose you come over and see what you make of it?"

"I'll do it," replied David. "I'm no doctor, as you know, but I'll see what I can do to-night rather than get Dad up."

It was not a long drive and David soon reached the house.

"Sorry to have troubled you, David," Mr. Bennet said, with what seemed an uncalled for embarrassment. "The fact is I get easily scared when there's sickness in the family, and you'll have to excuse me if I seem over anxious. What we've done may seem queer but it's well meant."

David went right to the bedside. He was not skilled at the business, and in his embarrassment, found it necessary to count the pulse several times. He heard the door open behind him and turned, watch in hand. Doctor Goodman stood in the doorway, a stern look on his face.

Mr. Bennet came hastily forward.

"I must explain to both of you," he said. "Old Doctor Williams has been treating my wife and he and the young doctor were here this afternoon. She seemed worse to-night, and when David explained that the old doctor was in bed I told him to come, and,

thinking it over after, I concluded I'd like an older head, too, so I thought I'd call you, too, Doctor Goodman. I ought to have told the young doctor when he came, but to be honest, I thought I could explain better when you both got here.

"I hope it's all right," he added, as he noted the look of dismay in David's face and the evident dissatisfaction of Doctor Goodman.

"As I don't recognize the young man as a doctor I cannot consult with him," announced Doctor Goodman. He turned and left the house before David had a chance to explain.

XXIX

"HEAVEN'S WARNIN'S"

IF David served to lighten the doctor's burden and be a pleasant companion to him in the days that followed (and the doctor declared that he did), it was not because he was himself light-hearted. He felt that he was now irretrievably disgraced in the eyes of Doctor Goodman as a pretender, and, if he wished to call him so, a quack, and Doctor Goodman's eyes served also as organs of vision for Elsie in many things.

The old doctor's humorous account of his meeting with Sam Enter did not serve to lighten David's gloom.

"Sam's real vexed at ye, Davy," he said. "He says ye ain't no doctor at all an' he ain't goin' ter call ye no more. Seems he favoured Doc Goodman with a call the day arter ye seen him, ye understan' me. Doc looked at his leg an' he says: 'Quite a nasty abrasion, Sam,' he says, 'but it'll git well if ye keep it clean,' he says. Then Sam told him 'bout yore visit an' says ter him: 'Davy looked all over it an' he didn't know it was no abrasion,' he says. 'Him jes' f'm college an' callin' it a sore,' he says. 'I don't think he ain't no doctor at all,' he says. Sam's 'bliged ter admit 'at Doc Goodman didn't agree with him in so many words, but he says he shorely looked it."

David laughed at the recital, but with a very indifferent merriment. Doctor Goodman would be bound to think that he was setting himself up as a physician before mastering even the rudiments of medicine, and might well brand him as a pretender. He

might even, as county physician, feel it his duty to cause his arrest for practising medicine without a license. He found, on consideration, that he cared less about this than he did for what the doctor, and incidentally Elsie, really thought of him. To be considered an impostor, a pretender to skill which he did not possess, was an intolerable thought. On the other hand, his express duty at present was to lighten the burden of his foster-father, and if this entailed undertakings which might be misunderstood he would yet do them, though the whole world misconstrued.

He hoped for a chance to explain to Doctor Goodman, but it needed a very favourable opportunity and none seemed to offer for a time.

Then, one day, he saw the doctor in the village, making for the station just as the afternoon train came in. He hurried along on the chance of a word of explanation before the train arrived. But it was already in as he reached the platform, and the doctor was standing at the steps, evidently expecting to meet some one. Rather than disturb him at such a time, David stood back in the shadow and waited. To his intense surprise, who should step out of the car but Elsie, trim and neat in all the fascination of a new travelling costume, the same Elsie of whom he had been so sure a few short weeks ago. And here she was, to hear all the disparaging reports of a disapproving father, and all of them misconstructions. It was too much. He would go forward and make this the time for his explanation. He had no reason to stand back because of Elsie's coming!

But he did have a reason, and the reason followed Elsie quickly enough to stay his impetuous advance. It was the accomplished person of Mr. Thornton, well-dressed, impressive, swinging Elsie's suitcase in one hand, his own in the other. David gave one compre-

hensive look, and rushed through the station and away.

His gloom would have been noticed at home but for the fact that there was still greater gloom there. The doctor had lost another case of diphtheria. It was a little child who but yesterday had seemed to be gaining, a case the doctor had reluctantly allowed David to examine, feeling that he must see such cases if he were to be a doctor, yet dreading the exposure for him.

Aunt Mercy was trying to console him.

"Ye done yore best, Doc. She seemed better afore ye left her, an' if it hadn't ben fer her pore heart, ye wouldn't hev lost her. What use is it ter take it so hard?"

"It's no good talkin' ter me now, Mercy. I'd hoped they wouldn't be no more. Doc Goodman ain't lost none."

"But Doc's had all the light cases. He ain't had nary a case thet's been sick more'n a week or so. Course he don't lose none when he gits the easy ones."

"Queer Doc sh'd hev all the light cases an' me all the hard ones, ain't it, Mercy? They's somethin' else. Mebbe it's 'cause I'm a wicked old man an' I've kerried hard feelin's. Leave me be, Mercy. I mus' talk ter Him about it."

David lost sight of his trouble in the agony which was manifest in the old man. There must be no deserting him in these days. One thing he could do, and did at the first opportunity. He tried to tell the old doctor what he knew about the remedy Doctor Goodman was using.

"Davy," the old man replied, quietly. "He give me this oil to use fer healin' sickness. S' far es I know dipthery is sickness jes' like any other kind, an' while it's true I'm losing some patients I'm gettin' more cures, an' s'long es I use the oil fer one sickness, I use it fer all, less'n He sh'd say not."

The first gleam of sunshine to penetrate David's gloom came on the following day, when he felt a vigorous clap on the shoulder and turned to look into the face of Johnny Langston.

"Well, old Tombstone. You look as solemn as an undertaker," was the amiable young man's greeting.

"Don't say it, Johnny," begged David. "Just now it comes too near being true."

"Sorry I spoke then," apologized Johnny. "I suppose you know about the mess we got into at the college?"

"Hadn't heard a word," David assured him. "How do you come to be home?"

"Diphtheria! Broke out in a frat house and two boarding-houses, in some of the boys who skipped from Mrs. Hamand's. So many were exposed, it meant about half the school must stay out, so, being so near Christmas, they just closed her down. So you won't be out much more than the rest of us."

So that was the explanation of Elsie's homecoming. But it didn't explain Thornton. However, Johnny proceeded to attend to this.

"I went over to Elsie's last night, expecting, of course, I'd see you there; but the only man there was that chap Thornton. Now, Dave, I've told you what I think about this before, and I'm willing to do it again. Honest, I don't think you're doing right giving that fellow a clear field like that. You seem to feel so cock-sure of yourself, and you're going to wake up some day and find you were mightily mistaken. I tell you again this is a time when you ought to be right up to the front with your first-aid package. Absent treatment won't count worth a cent."

"You'd be all right, Johnny, if you weren't about a thousand miles off in your diagnosis. I'm not there because I'm not wanted. If you want to follow your

medical simile, they haven't called me in the case and they won't."

"You jump in without a call, then, Dave, the same way that Thornton chap's doing. Don't wait on ethics. And don't be too anxious to run in opposition to Doctor Goodman. He's the one you have to fear."

"Did he say anything about me last night?"

"Nothing very much. But he thinks you and the old doctor are both wrong. See here, Dave. You saw what the serum treatment did for Curry. Why can't you persuade your Dad to use it?"

"It's impossible, Johnny," answered David. "I did tell him about it, but you know the oil is sacred in his thought, and where it won't cure nothing will. I wake up in the night thinking of these sick children and wishing they might have the new treatment. But what more can I do? I have never argued with Dad in my life, and this particular subject is one in which he would bear no argument from any one. I cannot go to the people and implore them to get another doctor. I can't see anything to do but just stay by Dad, and help him and hold him up the best I can, and hope and pray this epidemic will soon be over. It is harder than you think, Johnny. It comes pretty near breaking me up. And you talk about going after Elsie—everything I do now and every step I take is carrying us further apart."

Johnny put his arm on his friend's shoulder in his affectionate way.

"Dave, old boy, forgive me for talking nonsense. I can see you're in an awfully tight place. You trust Johnny Langston to give you a leg over."

There may have been little but a boyish friend's impulse in the words, but they spoke comfort to the sore heart that had felt little but buffeting of late. And David needed comfort at this time.

Never before in his self-reliant young life had he

suffered the depression which now hung over him. As he drove for the doctor, his efforts to be cheery and joyous were pathetic in their forced endeavour. The work seemed to be telling on him even more than on the doctor himself. When he came home at night he was so tired that his bones ached, and when he went to bed his usual restful sleep was far from him.

So he was that night when the doctor came in late, from a call he had insisted on making alone, and said in a strained, awed tone that another case of diphtheria had gone.

David knew nothing to say. For some reason an irresistible desire to laugh rose in him—to laugh wild and long. Rather than disgrace himself he rushed into the dark kitchen. He could hear Aunt Mercy's rude consolation: "Ye done yore best, Doc. Don't take it so hard, boy. Ye cert'ny done yore best. Why's Gawd tryin' ye so?"

"Don't question Him, Mercy," admonished the old doctor. "I'm a wicked old man, but He wouldn't tek a baby f'm its ma jes' to punish me. They's somethin' else, Mercy. They's somethin' else. An' wuss thing of all, they's to be another yet. They allus goes in threes, ye know. It was so the other time. Now, this is two this time, so they's boun' ter be another, ter mek the three. Oh, if He would restore me to His favour!"

David went to bed with these words ringing in his ears, and tossed through a dreary, long night, turning them over and over. When he rose in the morning the room turned around several times and he fell to the floor. Aunt Mercy heard the noise and hurried in. She helped him back to his bed, and soon came back with the doctor.

"D'ye feel sick, Davy?" asked the old man, anxiously.

"No, Dad, I'm all right," David replied. "I felt

pretty bad yesterday, but I'm all right this morning, only I'm dizzy if I try to rise, and I have just a trifle of a raw feeling in my throat."

The old doctor looked at his throat, and there was no effort to conceal the concern in his face as he concluded. Then he came back to the bed and began giving his treatment, the first time there had been occasion for its use with David since the time of his adoption.

David lay back in quiet indifference. His troubles now seemed curiously remote. He had no desire to get up to do anything, and strange as it seemed there was now no urging sense of duty upon him. His head ached and his arms and legs were too heavy for their joints, so that he was obliged to keep moving them from one part of the bed to another to find a place not pressed down hard; otherwise he was more at ease than for several days. His chief desire was to be left alone. It would be fine if he could go off into a long, restful sleep. He believed it would set him up completely. But there were so many disturbances to arouse him, something always seemed to bring him back just as he was sinking away.

Toward evening the bed began to be very hot, the covers were intolerable. He thrashed through a miserably long night, but seemed to get an hour or two of restful sleep in the morning, so that he looked and felt improved, and the old doctor was able to start on his long round of calls (for a country doctor's calls cannot be slighted for sickness of any member of the family save himself), with a little more cheer.

The weather had made a sudden change for the worse, and it was a chill, blustering day. About noon the first snow of the winter began to fall. It came down steadily all the afternoon, though for several hours the ground stayed clear in the wind-swept places. Toward evening these, too, whitened with their winter

mantle, while in gullies and hollows and by fences and hedges, the drifts were deep and treacherous.

Aunt Mercy watched alone through the long day. Bad as was the day she could have obtained help by telephoning, but her reserve had always held her within herself, and in this heavy trouble she would rather bear her burden alone. She knew that David was worse, for he talked irrationally in delirium during the afternoon. His mind ran back evidently to his experience nursing Curry, which was the chief burden of his talk. The old woman sponged him, gave him water, straightened his bedding, and waited on him with an anxious heart, while she longed for her brother to return. At last he came, his hair and beard matted with snow and ice from the storm. David roused enough as he came to the bedside to say: "Hello, Dad, you look like Santa Claus," then he was rambling off again.

With a certain degree of clarity he repeated the arguments of the city specialist anent antitoxin.

"Then they prove it on guinea pigs," he declared. "You see the guinea pigs are all treated the same way—all get the same dose of the diphtheria poison. Then a dozen are injected with antitoxin and a dozen left alone—control pigs they call 'em. The ones that get the antitoxin are soon chipper as ever—the others die of diphtheria. That's the way they tell if the stuff will do the work. I guess I'll have to be one of the guinea pigs that die of diphtheria, for Dad never would hear of antitoxin. Funny about guinea pigs, how you pick 'em up by their tails and their eyes'll drop out. You know I believed that for years till I found Dad was joking, 'cause they haven't any tails. This antitoxin's no joke, though. Great thing, I declare. It's going to cure Curry, all right. I'm mighty glad so I can get back to school. But it's no use talking of immunizing dose to me. Dad wouldn't like it."

The old man listened to his ramblings with agony in his face.

"Mercy, it's terrible!" he cried, in distress. "He's goin', Mercy. When they gits ter babblin' like that they allus go. He's the third one. I told you they had to be a third. Some way I felt all along fearful 'at it might be the boy. But that stuff couldn't save him, Mercy. Nothin' couldn't save him."

"Doc," pleaded Aunt Mercy, "give it a try. Ef he's goin' anyway, ef the ile ain't goin' ter save him, get Doc Goodman ter try the other." She said it in a whisper as one who makes an unheard-of plea, as one who makes a request, the presumption of which may well result in most severe rebuke. She was inviting him to a sacrilege. But he looked upon her in sorrow, not in anger.

"It's goin' ter be as hard fer you as me, Mercy; but it has ter be. Ye don't understan'. 'Tain't any perjudice I have 'bout usin' any kind of med'sin, but ye know full well this oil comes f'm Him. He sent it so I might use it fer healin'. If it don't heal him what use ter try other things, when ye know right well 'at, whatever's made use of, all healin' comes f'm Him, arter all, an' if He don't choose ter heal by His special app'inted oil, what kin ye expect f'm other things?

"Understan' me, Mercy, He's give special signs fer this oil." She knew the old man was going over this ground more to convince himself than her. "He's give some remark'ble signs. The healin' it's done, an' the signs of its daily supply, an' its Sabbath lack, which He has but jes' now took away."

He stopped as a new aspect seemed to divert the channel of his thoughts.

"Yes, Mercy," he continued, a little excitement now in his voice. "He has just took 'em away—these special signs—He has took 'em away. Mercy, can it be that He has took 'em fer a purpose? Can it be 'at

He meant me ter know 'at His favour was gone f'm the oil? Can it be thet it ain't blessed by Him no more? Can it be that these cases lost is because His healin's in it no more? Was He tryin' ter learn me? Was I so dumb I couldn't see it thet His light had gone from me? Is my boy ter be lost because I couldn't see 'at He wants other means now ter be used? Mercy, I see it! The times are passin'. New things are comin'!"

His voice rose in his excitement.

"Oh, thet I should hev ben blind! I'm an' old man, Lord, an old man, an' slow in mind. P'raps 'tain't even yet too late fer my boy. I mustn't lose a minute, Mercy. Doc Goodman mus' get here. Mebbe his new stuff what he's ben doin' s'much with is what's to foller the oil. Mebbe Davy's ravin's is Heaven's warnin's. I mus' go after Doc. No use ter try 'phonin', they're all out 'count o' the storm. I mus' go after him!"

"Wrop up extry well, Doc," counselled the old lady, glad with a great relief, but no excitement visible in her manner. "Wrop up extry an' git some corfee. I'll slip out an' bring Belle aroun'."

The opening door that let him out revealed to the doctor a fiercely raging storm, but the only dismay that it brought to him was a fear that it would handicap Doctor Goodman on his return. He did not even contemplate it as a hardship to himself.

XXX

THE CLOUDS ROLL BY

BELLE made quick time covering the familiar route to the Goodman home, in spite of the storm.

Elsie answered the doctor's knock.

"Why, Doctor Williams! Come right in out of the storm. When did we have such a night? You've come to see papa, haven't you, and you know you doctors are such terrible people he couldn't even stay home on a night like this. Come and sit down, Doctor. You know Mr. Thornton, don't you?"

"I must n't stay, my dear," replied the doctor. "I mus' find him. It's fer my boy. He's stricken with dipthery. The oil ain't doin' no good an' the Lord has laid it on me to git yore paw ter give him his med'sin. I kain't wait, Elsie. I'm afraid. My boy is pow'ful sick."

Elsie's face turned very white under this recital, but she kept herself under control, as became a doctor's daughter.

"I'm afraid it's going to be hard to reach father, Doctor. He's at the Beecher place in the lower valley. You know how the road has to wind around to get there, and that long stretch around the marsh. It makes eight or nine miles of heavy road. We figured it to-night before papa started, and I told him if I were he I would just drop down the Stairsteps like I used to do. Jake drove him over before dark, and they didn't expect to try to come back to-night."

"What did you mean by the Stairsteps, Miss Goodman?" Thornton asked.

"Doctor knows," replied Elsie. "It's a footpath down the side of the Bluff that shortens the distance to little over a mile. In fine weather any active person can use it, but there are a few places that are dangerous at any time."

"Yes, I've travelled it, Elsie," said the doctor. "An' I b'leeve I kin travel it to-night agen. It's goin' ter save an hour or two fer the boy, when hours count. I know where Beecher's is an' I'll try the Stairsteps."

"I believe you can do it, Doctor. And I'll go with you. Remember I've climbed over every foot of this country while you've kept the road with your buggy. I know the Stairsteps every step and turn. I'll get some antitoxin in case father shouldn't have any with him, and I'll be with you in a minute."

"No, child, it won't do," protested the doctor. "Too much risk. Too bad a night. I'm riskin' it 'cause my old life is wuth mighty little ef he goes, but they ain't no call fer you to do nothin' of the kind."

"No, Miss Goodman," chimed in Thornton, "it sounds too dangerous. You would be risking your life."

Elsie turned to the two men with an air of dignity.

"I know what I am proposing," she explained. "I know the route far better than Doctor, and can be of real assistance. Two are better than one on this trip, or I would go alone. You forget that I also have some interest in this matter. If I am risking my life, there is no service in which I would do so more willingly."

She looked straight at Thornton with this, and as she left the room he knew she meant the last sentence for him.

When she came back she was dressed for the climb. A lantern and a stout rope formed part of the equipment. The rope Elsie tied around her waist, and gave the free end to the doctor that he might check any

tendency to too rapid a descent. Thornton, forbidden to go, helplessly watched them into the night.

When they reached the head of the Bluff, Elsie took the lantern and started down the snow-covered track, with the old doctor following behind her the full length of the rope. The wind driving against the Bluff fortunately had kept the track fairly clear in most places. Once or twice Elsie slipped, but the doctor always braced up on the rope and allowed her to gain her footing. Once he himself slipped, in spite of his stick, and started down at a tremendous rate. Elsie flung herself to the side of a young sapling before he had gained much momentum, and the pull of the rope on the young tree served to bring him up short.

The drifts were the most distressing feature. They were floundering in them before they had gone a hundred yards. The snow-laden branches of the trees whipped their loads into their faces. Elsie was wet through in a few moments. The doctor had passed the place where he could be made worse. When they came to the precipitous spot where the grapevine rope had to be depended upon, the place where David came to grief years before, the doctor insisted upon going first.

But they both made the trip in safety, and soon they could see the lights in the Beecher house at the foot of the path. Elsie felt so glad to be at the end of her journey that she lost her caution, and the doctor, also being off his guard, was pulled down with her as she fell, so that they made the last fifty yards of the trip in a slippery roll and tumble.

"Are you hurt, Doctor?" called Elsie, anxiously, as she scrambled to her feet.

"I was jest about to ask ye," replied the doctor, as a little more slowly and stiffly he struggled into an erect posture. "Good fer us the snow had padded

the track, an' good fer us 'at we was so near the end of it."

"Yes, here's the Beecher place right here," said Elsie. "I don't believe we've been half an hour."

The old doctor dreaded this meeting with Doctor Goodman. They had not spoken for weeks; he had cherished hard feelings toward him, and now he was come to ask a great favour. The fact that it involved his own humiliation, however, troubled him but little, for he had spent many years learning the grace of humility.

But Doctor Goodman came from the sick-room with outstretched hand.

"You're just the man I'm glad to see to-night, Doctor," said he. "I hope your experience can help me out on this case."

"Doc, I'm after ye ter drag ye away f'm this case fer a while, ef I kin," said the old man. "It's my boy David, Doctor. He has the dipthery, bad. The Lord's showed me the oil won't cure, an' He's laid it on me ter come an' git you ter try yore new med'sin. Doctor, will ye do it fer the boy? Ye may know it's a desp'rit case or I wouldn't come over the Bluff on a night like this an' let yore little gel come ter guide me."

"I tremble to think of it, Doctor. I'm glad you came yourself, because some one must be with Mrs. Beecher. I know she will be safe with you, and I will drive over to your house at once and take my madcap girl along. I'm glad she brought the antitoxin. It saves time. While they are bringing my horse let me tell you about the patient."

The drive to Latham Corners seemed drearily long compared with the exciting trip over the Bluff, but Elsie concealed her weariness. When they reached David's house, she made ready to dismount, but her father stopped her.

"You can't go in, you know, my dear," said he.

"Why not?" she enquired. "I'm a doctor's daughter."

"And that's one of the good reasons why you won't go in, my dear," announced her father. "Just the fact that you are a doctor's daughter and that your father still has a little, rather common sense. You've done enough for to-night, girlie. You drive this horse home —it's a clear road—then you can just tie her in the barn, and go to bed like a good girl. Send the horse back here first thing in the morning, please."

Afterwards, Doctor Goodman had occasion to be very glad indeed that he insisted on Elsie's keeping out, for it saved him from the reproach of carelessness.

The doctor found David still muttering in his delirium. He seemed to have enough recognition of the doctor to start a new chain of ideas, for he began at once explaining his visit to Mr. Bennet.

"Doctor Goodman ought not hold that against me. I didn't pretend to the Bennets that I was a doctor or knew much about doctoring. I was just there to save Dad. Don't hardly believe they could prosecute me for that. I'm no doctor, Sam, but then you don't need any doctor."

The clinical picture was bad without these ravings. Doctor Goodman made no effort to conceal his anxiety as he stood with Aunt Mercy at the bedside.

"Awful sick boy, ain't he, Doc?" asked Aunt Mercy, in a hopeless tone. "Ye think ye can help him?"

"We'll get right to it, Aunt Mercy, and do the very best possible, anyway. Only God can say if there is any help for him."

Once, for a minute, as the doctor injected the antitoxin, David really seemed to have a lucid interval.

"Keep still, David," the doctor hastened to impress upon him. "I'm giving you the antitoxin treatment, and you're going to get well."

From that on, there were no more ravings about the guinea pigs or Curry's sickness. His talk turned to school matters, and for the first time he began to mention Elsie and Thornton.

When the man came with the horse at daybreak, the doctor repeated his treatment and departed. He had given his best work. It was not for him to watch the issue, though he had already given much more time than he could spare for the ordinary case. There were others in need of his help.

David's struggle for life entailed many visits, but though he lay for many days barely on the right side of the balance, sometimes seeming even to make brief excursions to the wrong side, he was not again in the urgent condition of that first night. He was a good fighter, and tried to help the battle along as soon as he was sufficiently clear-minded to realize his condition.

But he was not really out of danger when Doctor Goodman's anxiety was transferred to his own home, for Elsie developed the disease. Where she contracted it—since she had not been permitted to see David—was a doubtful question; but many people came to the Goodman home, some of them from houses of sickness, giving ample opportunity. Fortunately, the anxiety was short-lived, for the case was unusually mild. The doctor declared she was hardly sick enough to allow of a diagnosis, and said, jokingly, that he was almost ashamed that one of his family should treat disease so lightly. She was up and out while David was still lying weak and emaciated on his bed of sickness, and he did not even know she had been ill until——

The weary days dragged by very slowly for the boy. The poison of the disease had attacked him so severely that it was not easily thrown off, and, when it did leave, such havoc had it wrought in the vigorous constitu-

tion which had fought it, and by outside reinforcements, barely won, that many a long weary day of weakness would be occupied in tissue repair and upbuilding before there would come again the buoyant sense of life and superabundant vigour which had before been David's unrecognized daily blessing.

His mind was not entirely satisfied with the thoughts which entertained it as the days dragged by. He was thankful that his foster-father had yielded his prejudice to give him his chance of recovery, but yet he did not know that any real change had taken place in his views. The old folks considered David too weak to be told anything so important, never thinking of the uplift it would give him. So he supposed the doctor would still have the same expectations for him, and as he lay there he knew that he would have to disappoint him. There was no doubt about it now. If he was to be a doctor at all, it must be one who followed the leadings of science. It was not pleasant to think of the day when the old doctor must be told this. It was a depressing thought, yet it lay heavy upon his heart most of the time.

His mind frequently turned to Elsie, but he always saw her, as at the last time, stepping out of the railway car, with Thornton immediately behind handling her baggage with such an air of proprietorship. There was little comfort in that. Little wonder that he still talked ramblingly in his broken sleep at night, or that he failed to make the gain that the doctor expected from such a normally vigorous young athlete.

The old doctor and Aunt Mercy, without losing their deep gratitude for the marvellous delivery from the dreadful disease, were now deeply concerned at his inability to recuperate.

"Nex' time Doc Goodman comes I'm sure goin' ter speak up fer him ter give the boy somethin' ter build him up, Mercy," Doc said one day. "He'd

orter be pretty nigh on his feet by now, an' here he is jes' about able to turn in bed."

"I guess Doc Goodman c'd give him what he needs ef he's a mind to do it," agreed Aunt Mercy. Then she added: "Doc, sence ye ain't holdin' ter the ile no longer, I wonder w'd ye mind if I went out an' gathered somethin' fer him fer a tonic. I b'lieve it'll be all right with Doc Goodman."

"Nobuddy ever come to no harm f'm anythin' you fixed up, Mercy," indulgently granted the old doctor. "You jes' go ahead, but I've a notion you'll find it hard to gether anythin' with s'much snow on the groun'."

"Never ye mind, Doc. Jes' you git Belle ready fer me."

It was a beautiful, sunny afternoon, mild enough to make the snow soft, yet not so as to make the roads slushy and spoil the pleasure of driving; just such a day as comes to lighten the dreariness of winter, and it was the day before Christmas.

Aunt Mercy drove cheerfully away, her sleigh-bells jingling merrily, and Doc turned back to the house to watch with David in her absence.

David was in a heavy doze and the doctor, very tired, soon joined him. Both slept so soundly that the returning sleigh did not disturb them, and it was left for Aunt Mercy, who came in with a cheerful face, flushed with excitement as a young girl.

"S'cuse me, Mercy," apologized the doctor, "must er ben kinder takin' a little nap, ye understan' me. I was awake an' watchin' jest a minute ago. Aunt Mercy's ben out ter git a tonic fer ye, Davy, boy," he explained to David. 'I guess she'll bring it in soon as it's fixed, an' we're hopin' it'll put some life inter this yere bag o' bones yo're hidin' under the sheet."

"I guess ye hev slep' a minute, Doc," said Aunt Mercy, contemptuously. "I got the tonic an' got it

all fixed an' I want ter give it to Davy all my own self, so ye kin jes' march out. Now, Davy, boy, ye shuts yore eyes an' keeps real quiet an' I'll give it right quick. This ain't nothin' 'at tastes nasty, an' it don't hev ter be tuk by the mouth; leastways," she added, speculatively, "not unless ye wants ter."

The sparkling undercurrent of excitement manifest in Aunt Mercy had in some strange way communicated itself to David. Wild thoughts surged through his head and his pulse beat very quick as he lay obediently with closed eyes waiting for "the tonic." Then he felt again the presence of Aunt Mercy in the room, heard her say: "Ye may shut yore mouth, Davy. It ain't ter be swallowed," and the next instant his big, wasted hand closed over the cool plump fingers of a fellow-sufferer from diphtheria.

He hardly dared open his eyes. It was too good to be true. But vision was necessary for the absorption of this tonic, and David was not one to shrink from such a dose.

His first remark was very commonplace, for, after all, David was a commonplace man.

"They must think I'm past contagion, Elsie, or they'd never give me this pleasure."

"They don't have to think about it, David, and you'd never guess why."

"How many guesses would you give me this time, Elsie?"

"Oh, I'd have to give you a hundred, I suppose, the condition you're in now. No, sir, I'll tell you. While you've been lying here I've developed diphtheria, been treated for it, got well of it, and out this beautiful Christmas Eve for the first time. And it's such a joke on papa after he was so particular that first night he came to see you, wouldn't let me come in to get warm, but sent me right home through the storm."

"You were here that first night, Elsie? How did it happen?"

And then, very naturally, came the story of Doc Williams' errand and the trip down the Stairsteps, and as the large, bony hand tightened over the small, plump one—which all this time had not been removed—Elsie was compelled to think that Aunt Mercy had over-estimated the patient's need of a tonic, in presenting her earnest plea a short time ago.

"So Dad went himself after your father, Elsie? I wonder if that means that he has abandoned the oil?"

"Yes, I myself heard him say as much."

"Then, Elsie, do you see what that means?" and the plump hand discovered that there was even yet more vigour in the lean one. "It means that I can go ahead. It means four years' medical course, a year or two in the hospitals, and then a chance to face the world in the right way, and do something. It clears almost everything up, Elsie, do you see?"

"Yes, I see, David. There's nothing now to stand in the way of your going ahead and being a great man."

"Only, Elsie, the adjective you want is not great but useful. What a Christmas gift to bring a fellow!"

"It's the only one I could bring, David, for this is my first day out. I've had no chance to get anything for any one."

"You couldn't bring me anything better, Elsie, if you'll only make it complete."

"How can I make it complete, David?" she asked in innocent ignorance, yet with a rosy face that betrayed some little knowledge.

"May I tell you, Elsie? Here, lying on my bed, a living skeleton, with nothing ahead but hopes. May I tell you?"

She pretended no longer. "I am listening, David," she said, in a quiet whisper.

"Then, Elsie, it will be complete if you will say that in these years of hard work, study, and research, I may have you for my inspiration and a hope that at the end of the study and the beginning of the work it will be to start out with you as my companion; that these years of pleasant fellowship we have had in school may go on and on through life. It was so dreary to look ahead through life and think it must be one way for you and another way for me, it took all the joy and ambition out of me. Every plan I make and every picture my fancy draws has you in it somewhere in a prominent place. Take you out and the charm's all gone. And I've tried to be square, Elsie. You know I've never pestered you with this for all the years it has been in my heart; but now, I want to make sure of you. What can you say to me, Elsie?"

She gave a merry little laugh.

"Forgive me for laughing, David. It doesn't seem like what it really is" (even then she dodged the word "proposal"), "because you know it's you, Davy, and I've known it so long. But"—her voice dropped—"you may leave me in your pictures, David. I want to be in them as much as you want me. Will that do? And I wish you the very happiest kind of a Happy Christmas!"

Enough said; this tonic of Aunt Mercy's was something wonderful—the way it inspired new life and action in weary bones and muscle was something remarkable. Possibly Aunt Mercy thought its dosage should be regulated, for she knocked at the door just then and the effect moderated at once.

"Ye look better a'ready, Davy," was the old lady's verdict as she entered. "Ef ye kin stan' another visitor, they's a man here to see Doc'd be glad to look in on ye."

"I've stayed altogether too long, Aunt Mercy," ex-

claimed Elsie, with tell-tale face and voice. "I'm going right home, so bring the other visitor in."

It was some little time after Elsie had gone before he came. It was Thornton. David held out his hand and he took it, though with a certain restraint.

"Glad you are improving David. You look quite well and happy."

"I feel happy. I've just been enjoying mighty pleasant company." David could not resist the little triumph.

"So it's all arranged, is it, David? Everything is going to be smooth sailing from now on?"

"I believe so," David laughed. "Seems too bad you should have so little result for all your business at Lewistown."

"I don't know about that, David. You never did know what my business was there, did you? I don't mind telling you now. My firm does quite a business in oil lands. From seeing your spring here I was led to investigate things last summer, and when I put the matter to the firm they commissioned me to secure leases on the likely oil ground. I kept it quiet, of course, for business purposes. That's my errand with your father to-day. We're going to drill our first well right down through the healing spring, my boy, and I'll venture to predict that we won't go very far to strike oil."

David's face clouded. "Seems almost too bad," he said.

"Yes, that's what the doctor thought at first. But after a little he said: 'It's all His. If He don't want me to use it fer healing, it's right He should some other way.' No false sentiment about the doctor."

"And I hope none about me," responded David.

"I'm just in to say good-bye," said Thornton. "I go to the city to-night, where I will spend Christmas

with my mother, and from there we go to a health resort in Germany."

"So your mother is going to Germany?" remarked David. "I hope she will get better."

"I hope she will," said Thornton. "She was quite upset when the doctor told her he would treat her no more. I had quite an argument with her, though, and I think I won. I put it to her this way. I said, 'Now, mother, if you are ever to get any help that nature cannot give, you will get it from scientific medicine. It's no good trying another cure here. None of them can be better than this. It shows that high recommendations, reports of cures, even goodness and honesty of purpose all go for little or nothing unless properly directed. You've got good from Doctor Williams, and if he opens his Inn next year I believe it will pay you to come back and rest up under his general supervision. But if you want special medical treatment go to the men who are educated for it and trained to it.' And she's going. But she'll be back next year if doctor will let her."

He was gone, and David's wish for a Merry Christmas, shouted after his retreating figure, was most genuine, for he had nothing but kindness in his heart toward him now.

His joy was clouded by one thing only, and the cloud showed in his face when the doctor came in to say "good-night and Merry Christmas" to him. The old man's keen eye was quick to notice.

"Davy, boy," said he, "wherefore that sorry look? Ye orter be es jolly es a young steer, ye understan' me. Everythin' workin' fine fer ye. What ye so glum about? Tell yore old daddy."

David gripped the old man's hand.

"I know it's all mighty good, Dad. I feel happier than seems right. But it just seems a shame that everything's so bright and promising for me, and

here's you, who deserve so many good things, laid on the shelf."

"I dunno s'much es to that, Davy. Really now, I don't b'leeve I'd jes' say nothin' like that. I 'low I did hev some such idee. But fust off, 'long come Bill Haskins an' wants me ter see Miss Haskins, ye understan' me. I says ter him, says I, 'Why, Bill,' I says, 'don't ye know I've throwed over usin' the healin' oil? Don't ye know I've c'ncluded 'twan't nothin' but jes' good common oil, an' sold the hull thing to a comp'ny 'at's goin' ter drill a well. You don't want nothin' o' me.'

"Bill looks at me a minute an' then he up an' says: 'Well, now, Doc, what's thet got ter do with it?' he says. 'It's you what we want. We don't want no oil. You never used no oil on the old lady afore. Now, you come right along quick,' he says.

"An' I went. An' I ben goin' some place er other mos' every day. An' they's lots o' things ter do fer 'em with nary a drop of oil. An' I guess I'll keep on goin' till some real smart doctor comes ter this neck o' the woods that'll tek keer o' the poor folk better'n I kin, less'n I wear plumb away fust. Don't ye worry, Davy, boy. They's lots fer old Doc ter do yit.

"An' they's things he kin do ye'd never s'picion, Davy," he continued. "Ye know, Davy, boy, one dose of antitoxin didn't do but mighty little good to a case bad as your'n. Doc Goodman he couldn't stay by ye all the time. D'ye know who give ye the other doses? You was plumb crazy mos' all the time, so I'll have ter tell ye. It were yore old quack daddy, Davy, boy!"

XXXI

CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS! What a word of cheer. Such visions of happy celebrations past, and happier ones to come, as it brings to one's mind; and more than that, to one's heart! What a word of magic! Such thoughts of happy mystery envelop it, such disproportionate secrecy, such innocent assumptions of surprise, such excessive expressions of thankfulness for the least undesired trifle. And all because it's Christmas, just an ordinary Christmas!

But the Christmas at Latham Corners is no ordinary one this year. A whole countryside has just had lifted from it the darkness of a devastating disease. There are homes where hearts are sore because the scourge has worked its worst, but far more numerous are those where the disease was grappled and fought so successfully by the ministrations of scientific medicine that nothing remains but cheerful thanks for recovery.

In the Goodman and Williams homes the quarantine, which had been lifted but a day or two, had interfered with the usual purchase and preparation of gifts, but they could be well dispensed with at a time when interchange of human hearts and gifts of human lives were in the balance.

In the morning Doctor Goodman came in to see his patient.

"Best record yet, David!" he exclaimed, after looking the boy over. "You look bright and happy, as if you were getting back to health on the jump."

"That's the way I feel now, Doctor. I didn't know

how much I had to live for until yesterday. Did Elsie tell you?"

"She told me that you had just discovered that the doctor had given up the use of his oil, and there was no barrier in the way of your study of scientific medicine."

"Yes, sir. And there's a bigger thing yet. I didn't suppose she would tell you, but she said I might tell it to our own folks when I got a good chance, and this is as good as any. Elsie"—he spoke with a manly pride, though his usual betraying colour was beyond concealment—"Elsie has promised to furnish the inspiration for my studies. I don't expect anything for a long time. We are both young and I have years of hard study ahead, but when it's through she is going to be my wife—that is, if you don't object, of course."

The announcement was not entirely unexpected. Doctor Goodman had been suspicious of the warmth of Elsie's interesting remarks about her visit to David.

"David, you are the kind of a man any father would feel safe about letting take his girl. You can't help the one thing I have against you, your lack of genealogy. And the worst that can be said is that your family history is negative." The doctor gave a little laugh as he added: "I suppose I'm more or less of a crank about it; but we Goodmans have always been very proud of our family-tree."

"Perhaps Elsie won't mind very much," suggested David, hopefully.

"I've no doubt she's fought it out," answered the doctor. "She probably feels about as I do, that it's something you can't help, and that so long as it is blank we can just ignore it."

"I have never told her about the attempt of Goldielocks to connect me with that man who died in the penitentiary," remarked David. "I wonder if it wouldn't

be best to tell her all about it some time, so as to avoid any possible trouble if a garbled account of it came to her ears later on."

"She knows, my boy. She heard enough of it at the time, so that I was obliged to tell her all. She was inexpressibly shocked at the possibility and relieved at your escape. No doubt she had her own thoughts even then" (the doctor smiled as he spoke), "for I remember she exclaimed when I told her: 'How terrible! How glad I am that it isn't true, and how glad David must be. Oh, I never could marry a murderer's son!'"

"I wouldn't have expected her to," David replied, very soberly. "It's Christmas to-day. I'm glad I don't have even to think of such a fate. You don't think it'll hurt me to have some of the young folks in to see me this afternoon?"

"No, I think you can stand it if they don't keep you from your sleep too late. Who's coming?"

"Johnny and Nora and Elsie. We hope you'll come with Elsie. They won't stay late because Nora has a celebration at her house this evening they are all to attend. I believe Elsie said she intended to stay all night with Nora."

"So she did. I remember she said she would have her Christmas tree at Nora's. Well, if I'm coming back here this afternoon I must be getting along. One thing more, though. After what you've told me, I believe I must ask your advice. I have the chance of a Christmas gift for Elsie I'm uncertain about offering to her. I'll let you tell me what to do about it."

"You'll have to tell me what it is," said David.

"It is an offer that came this morning in a long telegram from your Sad Lady. She is about to take General Wilton to spend the winter in Italy, for his health. She evidently thinks Elsie has been very sick, and wants to take her along, to build her up. Seems

like a joke when you look at Elsie, but it would be a very nice trip."

"But Elsie wants to graduate this summer."

"She did want to. I don't know whether she does now or not. I gave her just a hint of this trip this morning, and she didn't seem very anxious to go, just now; thought she would rather wait a while, for some reason or other. But I didn't tell her anything definite about it."

"It would be a fine trip. I believe she'd better go, Doctor," said David, bravely, if not heartily.

Doctor Goodman laughed.

"I'll take to-day to think it over, anyway," said he. "They don't sail for several days yet. It will rush her, but she can't do anything Christmas Day, anyway."

David let him go without anything further, but in his heart he could not repress a wish that he would consider the trip unwise.

In the afternoon came Johnny with Nora. The big, hearty boy came bursting in with the velocity of a northwest blizzard, and the gentleness of a gleam of sunshine. The meeting—their first since David's sickness—was pathetic, but weak as David was from his illness it was not in his eyes that the moisture gathered, for his emotions lay deep, and their signs were not readily manifest.

"Johnny's crying, I declare," teased Nora.

"These tears!" exclaimed Johnny. "Oh, excuse these tears, for they were bound to come. For weeks I've saved up a tear whenever I could spare one from my own sad lot, thinking that soon I'd have to shed some for old Dave. And they're well spent, too. Why, wouldn't anybody cry to look at this old scarecrow and think of it playing ball. Oh, my! he couldn't hold a pitcher from the infant class. He'll never be able to play ball with Johnny again."

"He doesn't want to!" exclaimed Elsie, indignantly. "He's going to have something better to do, and he's got to be careful of his company, anyway."

"It's like that, is it?" said Johnny, impudently. "In possession already? No loose characters need apply. Goodness, Dave, what a thing it is to be married!"

Elsie blushed very prettily.

"Well," she said, "you were talking as if you were sorry David didn't need your tears."

"You mistake, me, sister. Little brother Johnny is uproarious about this skinny skeleton's recovery. There are others, though, who will have sad hearts. Think how happy all those fellows who won't get that Austrian Scholarship will be. Then I saw our friend Thornton yesterday afternoon, after he'd been here, and found how well the boy was doing. He was cheerful as an undertaker. His joy overpowered him. The last I saw of him he was going into the *Herald* office, and I hollered across to him to suggest that he have them insert an obituary notice for him."

"He doesn't like Johnny, anyway!" exclaimed Nora. "Johnny always acts the monkey about him, and I don't blame him."

"Don't blame whom, Nora?" Elsie asked, innocently. "You mean you don't blame Mr. Thornton?"

"I don't mean anything about Mr. Thornton. He's a disagreeable subject, and this is Christmas Day. Let's talk about things we all like."

And they did, and if their words were merry, their hearts were still merrier. And it was time for Johnny to escort the girls back to Nora's house before the afternoon seemed well begun.

Doctor Goodman still lingered for a little chat with the old doctor, when another visitor arrived. It was the newspaper man. He was evidently ill at ease and looked ill in body; so much so indeed that the old

doctor naturally supposed he was seeking his family physician.

"Ye want to see Doc Goodman?" he suggested. "You two c'n jes' step into my little room while Doc looks ye over."

"I'll stay here," said the newspaper man. "I want to see all of you. I'm not sick in body."

"Beg pardon," apologized the old doctor. "Yore looks is again' ye to-night. Somethin' 'bout 'em makes ye look putty wretched."

"I am wretched," the newspaper man replied. "I am wretched, but it isn't from physical illness. It's because of what I've done."

The three men looked at him enquiringly, but no one volunteered a remark.

"This is Christmas Day," he continued. "It's supposed to be a day of peace and good-will. I'm here because there's no peace for me until I've tried to square myself with you and David. It's done and I'm afraid it can't be undone. But don't take it too hard. Try to forgive me."

A cloud of apprehension settled over David's heart. After all, sorrow is no less bitter because it is Christmas.

XXXII

THE NEWSPAPER MAN'S CONFESSION

"SOME men yield to one temptation, some to another. After I settled in Latham Corners in its quiet and its simplicity, I learned better to know myself. If there has been any good thing in my paper in these years it is because I went back to primal issues and saw things with the naked eye. I learned among other things that my own great temptation was the lust to be rich. As the impossibility of its complete realization settled down upon me it resolved itself into a minor form—one which I could feel was certainly legitimate—a desire for a competency.

"For two years and more I have known myself to be a man. I have had this greatly desired thing in my hands, and have refused to grasp it, because it meant unhappiness to those who had served me with kindness. I, who had long realized myself as essentially selfish, had refused to reach out and take my sweetest gratification, because of regard for the feelings of others. When I was tempted—and this was not infrequent—I revelled in the privilege of being a little more than an average man, and drew to myself the gratification of the superiority of one who has overcome his own pet desires.

"A few months ago I formed a great intimacy with a visitor here, and one day, in a glow of confidence, told him the story. Materialistic, he laughed at my self-denial. I could not blame him—he could not possibly know what it meant to me to conquer self, nor how much more of a man it made me—neither could he realize from what a depth of woe my self-denial

was keeping my friends. He laughed at my scruples. I cared little and continued in my self-gratulation. Times grew hard this fall, especially in this neighbourhood with its disease epidemic. My paper gives me a good income, so my family was not suffering; but we were obliged to cut off many little indulgences, and a little constant feeling of irritation at the restrictions grew within me.

"Yesterday came my acquaintance with a proposition that meant not a competence but a fortune! It meant an immense change in the whole neighbourhood. My friends for whom I denied myself were bound to become wealthy—they would forget their annoyance in their wealth. I myself could really be a rich man. All it needed was the ten thousand dollars, which was mine for writing a letter and showing my proof.

"It was too much for me. I mailed the letter last night, and no sooner had the train which bore it from the station vanished from sight than my hell of torment began. For I knew that I had cruelly destroyed the peace of two of my dearest friends. What shall I do, men? How can I be a man again?"

The younger men looked to the old doctor, enquiringly, their faces filled with concern.

"Friend," the old man answered him, "this old world's full o' sin an' sorrow, but the One we're keepin' holiday fer to-day, He paid the price in bitter agony, an' the sin you done yestiddy was included. But they won't be no peace of heart for you till ye've confessed yore fault. So that's fust."

"And I came for that purpose. You, Doctor, and David, are those with whom I have broken faith. Let me tell you all and may your God put it into your hearts to think the offence of no great account. I have hugged to myself for two years the thought that I was doing you a great favour. Perhaps I have mag-

nified its importance to you. If so, the blow may be softened by the attending gain."

The men heard him with puzled faces.

"I do not need to remind you of Goldielocks and his finish. You remember that he had a parting word for my ear alone. He had just time to tell me what you already knew, that he thought David the heir to the fortune of Gentleman George. But to this he added, 'He thinks he isn't, but don't let them deceive you. Both kids belonged to George.'

"In the light of what you had learned in Chicago of the mother having only one child this seemed impossible. But when I went to Chicago I looked into it. All manner of investigation had been made, but excepting for myself and Goldielocks, no one had the clue that there might be two boys. The other investigators were all foiled by the little chap's death and funeral, at which George's attendance was a matter of prison record. The only conclusion they could draw was that the will was a freak, intended to make trouble for the natural heir, the widow.

"My old newspaper work was of great help to me in following my clues. I soon found that old Mother Jones had left a daughter. From her I learned that one of the children had occasional visits from a woman of the town, and she was even able to give me her name and address. The rest was easy. This woman readily proved that the little chap who was killed was her illegitimate child.

"Then followed the natural conclusion that the other boy was the child of the legitimate mother. I found, through her lawyers, that this mother was a lady of wealth and station. Gentleman George was a man of fine family. As a young man in college he had fallen into bad company, largely the fault of Goldielocks, his classmate. His friends and family learned of his follies, but hoped constantly for im-

provement, which came spasmodically. In one of these spasms of reform he married a young girl of seventeen, who had fallen in love with his handsome figure and the mysterious glamour of his dual personality, and foolishly expected to complete his reform. She gave it up when, little more than a year after marriage, he stole her boy baby and disappeared. The family were led to think the baby dead, and the best they hoped for was to place Gentleman George—George Mixon was his proper name—in the same classification.

"The lawyers kept track of him, and for years this had been an easy job, as he had been sent up for a twenty-year sentence for being concerned in a crime in which murder had been committed. His will, when it came to their attention, was a mystery to them, as they had believed the boy dead in babyhood. The mother urged a most careful investigation, and great was their disappointment to find what they considered ample proof that, after living to boyhood, the death had indisputably occurred in later years. The final confirmation of this was the birthmark known to have been borne by the baby, and also by the dead boy. This birthmark was a reddish discolouration, of sigmoid shape, between the shoulders, and might easily be interpreted as the letter 'S'!

"I made use of the same confirmation to clinch my own investigations. The next day, making opportunity of a swimming trip, I read the letter 'S' between the shoulders of David!"

All turned to David at once. Propped in bed on his elbow, his face lined with pain, he said only, in a hoarse voice: "Finish it! Go on, I can stand it!"

"Then occurred my great struggle. What was I to do? The lady was nothing to me. I did not even know her name or where she lived. She considered the boy dead—could have but little real affection for

a child whom she had not seen since babyhood. On the other hand, I knew that David was the very joy of Doc's life; that all the hopes of years were centred in him. I questioned David, himself. You remember that I did, David. He spurned such an inheritance. I had owed Doc a debt of gratitude for years.

"I said, 'For once, I'll be a man. I'll prove that I wouldn't sell my soul for coin, after all. No one can possibly follow this clue without knowing of David. Goldielocks is dead. I will be as silent as the dead.'

"For two years I hugged this to myself and thought myself a broader man for it. Then I became very intimate with young Thornton. One day, in a fit of foolish confidence and braggadocio, I told him what was within my grasp. I mentioned no names, but there is no one but David hereabouts that it would fit, and he readily guessed.

"Yesterday he came to me and told me of the oil prospects. 'Put ten thousand dollars in the options I can point out,' he said, 'and in less than two years you will be a millionaire.' I told him ten thousand dollars was an impossible sum. He laughed. 'It is in your hand,' he said. He pointed out how every one else would be enriched by the proposition. Why not I?

"The temptation overpowered me—my gratitude for services, my loyalty to friends, all disappeared. It is beyond recall now. I have argued it every minute since. I have told myself that far from an offence it was a commendable act, an act I owed the mother, an act which the law really required of me, an act which could do none of you harm, and would undoubtedly do good. It is no use. I know I sold you for the money there was in it. I am as guilty as Judas, with his thirty pieces of silver."

"An' He forgave even Judas," said the old man, gently, breaking the profound silence which had bound the listeners. "Son, we ain't goin' to look forward to

the mess of trouble this thing's boun' to bring on us. I told Davy long ago 'at it made no real diff'runce who might be his earthly parents, jes' so he was a son an' heir of His. I ain't even sayin' we got anythin' to furgive, for what's right is right. But it's goin' to make a sore heart in a sick boy, an' if he c'n give ye the hand of friendship—an' he ain't the man I know him to be if he don't—they ain't none of the rest of us to hold back. Yore soul'll never be bought by gold again, son."

He was gone into the starry night, and the cry of David's soul rose to his lips: "Do not tell her. She must never know!"

XXXIII

"SHE MUST NEVER KNOW"

DOCTOR GOODMAN was a man of sound common sense and advanced knowledge. Old wives' fables gained little credence with him, and he was not one to believe a thing simply because it had come down through the ages, and was hoary with antiquity; on the contrary, the basaltic crust of fossildom would in itself prove a reason for incredulity and investigation. Heredity he had noted as a potent factor in the transmission of characteristics through successive generations, but in quiet discussion he would have insisted that favourable environment must not be overlooked as a modifier and corrector. But of how little weight is science when balanced against personal favour and parental love? Doctor Goodman's instant response to David's cry was its confirmation.

"No, she must not know such unhappy news. We will not tell her."

Doc Williams looked from one to the other, slowly, before he spoke.

"Seems to me yo're makin' a mistake, you two. On'y yestiddy you an' Elsie makin' it up to go through life together, sharin' joys an' bearin' sorrers, an' today plannin' to hide the very fust important thing. 'Twon't do at all."

"But don't you see, Dad, this changes everything? Elsie gave her promise without thought of this. You know what it would mean to her. I believe she'd stay by it if I were weak enough to let her. But I'm more of a man than that, I hope—to let her link herself and her family with the son of a man who died in

prison while paying the penalty for murder. I hope I'm more of a man than that." There was a pride even in his bitterness; indeed, it was questionable which gave the dominant note.

The old doctor went over to the bed, and gently pushed him back on his pillow.

"Yo're talkin' out of a sick mind, Davy, boy. Wait till yore strength comes back an' ye see things bright again, it'll be diff'runt then, won't it, Doc?" he appealed to Doctor Goodman.

"I hope it won't look so dark," assented Doctor Goodman, yet without heartiness. "I am obliged to feel David's point of view somewhat. It is no light matter. Elsie might say, and say truly, that she had no fear for David's qualities, inherited or otherwise. We know him too well. But things do not end with David. There are the years to come—the children yet unborn who must grow up to learn that their grandfather was—shall I say it?—a murderer! Do you dare to think of the silent anguish of a parent who has to tell his children of such a dark ancestry? I think of David and I tremble for him. I think of my girl, and my heart is wrung for her. I cannot say that David is wrong."

Then David heard a startling tone from the old doctor, from whose lips angry words seldom issued.

"Doc Goodman, you, a doctor, talkin' so! How fur back must ye go to fin' the murderer in yore fambly? S'posin' 'twas back to Cain, what then? Would that make David any less fit to mate with yore girl? Air two people what has joined themselves together in God's sight to be put asunder because of a thing done by a body they never much more'n seen? Is a man like my David—a prince, I say—to be cut off f'm his generation for sech quibbles as you raise? Is it better 'at sech childern as they two will bring never be born, or better 'at they come into the world an' take

a little sorrer like other folks? Don't ye s'pose, Doc, that there might even be 'nough pride o' name on one side o' the house to make up for both?" That the doctor could hurl such a shaft of sarcasm was indeed a sign that he was deeply stirred. But he went on even farther. "'Tain't yoreself yo're a-considerin' of, Doc, now? 'Tain't the thought that one grandaddy might be whatever ye choose to call him, an' the other grandaddy a Goodman? Ye plumb shore o' that, are ye?"

"Don't, Dad," begged David. "Doctor Goodman's first right is to look out for his daughter. I'm the one to say, and I say that I'll offer no such tainted history to any girl."

"Davy, boy, yore old dad is plumb stirred up, an' he ought to know better, an' you sick abed yet. We don't know as it's true, noways. Mebbe we'll find all our fuss for nothin'. Let's us wait till these yere lawyers finds out if Holmes's guess ain't all wrong afore we fuss."

"I'm afraid it's all too true, Dad. I feel that it is. But I guess we can wait. It isn't such a happy prospect that we should want to push it along. Of course, I'll have to tell Elsie something. I don't want her to know. Whatever happens, I don't want her to think of me in that terrible way. But I must make some kind of an explanation," he said, wearily.

"The best explanation will be to take advantage of Mrs. Wilton's offer, and have her start to-morrow to join her in New York for the trip to Europe. That will take her away while the investigation is going on. It's the best way and I'll see to it at once," said Doctor Goodman.

It did seem the best way, and David wearily acquiesced.

"I suppose I'd better not see her again before she goes. It wouldn't be best, would it? You tell her

some good reason, and perhaps I'll manage to get a note to her at the steamer."

But David chose a sorry messenger. Elsie's first remark when her father arrived at Nora's with packed trunk and arrangements made, after the rush of hasty explanation, was: "But, Papa, I must run back to the Corners to see David and say good-bye. He told you yesterday—he was going to if he got a chance. I know he did. He told you about—you know——"

"Yes, dear," the doctor attempted to explain. "David told me. He knows you're going and he would just as soon you didn't come back to see him. He's not expecting you."

"David just as soon I didn't come back to see him?" she exclaimed, astonished. "And he said that, after he had talked with you? Did he talk with you about what he said to me the day before?"

"Yes, Elsie. But that wasn't anything sure, you know. That's only a thing that may be if everything goes well. David wouldn't want you to think anything else."

"Did he say anything like that, Papa?" she asked, indignantly.

"Just about, daughter. Not quite in those words, but about that meaning. Isn't that enough?"

"Enough!" Her face flushed crimson. "Yes, it's enough, quite enough! Let's say no more about it. I don't care about going back. We'll have a day to spend in New York instead."

They did not recur to the subject, and the note which came to Elsie, in care of the Sad Lady, did not tend to help. For with foolish quixotism David had written: "Perhaps your travels will bring to you men of large thought and purpose, who will easily outweigh such poor attractions as you find in me. Should this be so I cannot, I dare not, hold you by any fancied tie which I might once have thought that I possessed."

And after reading these strange, unexplained, and inexplicable sentences again, she set her lips in a determined line and said only: "Very well, Mr. David!"

Doctor Goodman saw them safely away and in the hurry of departure thought he saw bustling around the vessel the figure of Mr. Thornton. He called to him, but Mr. Thornton was busily engaged bestowing the belongings of his mother and himself for their trip to the European health resort, and did not hear him, for, constantly as he thought of the Goodmans, he did not dream that they were within a thousand miles.

But Mr. Thornton did not remain long in his ignorance, and, before the first few hours of passage, had taken upon himself the full office of personal conductor to the charming young lady who was making her first voyage.

"Who is this Mr. Thornton?" enquired the Sad Lady, the second day out.

"He's an acquaintance of last summer who visited Latham Corners. Father thinks very highly of him. Actually he asked daddy if he might pay attentions to his little daughter, and got permission to go ahead and do his worst. What do you think of that?"

"Think it won't do at all," replied the Sad Lady. "My David has a prior claim."

"David has not. David wrote me a letter expressly disclaiming any title, deed, lien, mortgage, or other claim whatsoever to me or any of my possessions!"

"What an absurd idea!" exclaimed the Sad Lady. But she kept an eye both tender and vigilant upon Elsie, as well as her attendant.

XXXIV

DOC DECIDES TO SEE 'BOUT IT

ONCE having his feet set on the road to health, David was not to be turned back, however severe the blow. His ill-fortune was not absolutely crushing. One relief was the hope—though but faint—that after all it might be a mistake. Then his supposed father was not in any sense a real person to him—nothing more than a dim recollection. Most helpful of all was the inexpressible and almost inextinguishable sweetness of that knowledge that, come what would, Elsie had already yielded her promise and confessed her love. He might release her from the first, but nothing could change the second. No matter what came, he was bound to be to her always a person of first importance. And he would show that he was worth while.

Night was the worst time. One morning very early the doctor, returning from a call and looking in on the boy, as was his custom of late, found him shivering in a bath of sweat.

"What's matter, Davy, boy? Lemme git a light an' see what's ailin' ye," he asked, anxiously.

"It was a horrible dream, Dad," groaned David. "The worst dream I ever had in my life. I don't even want to tell it."

"Ye must, Davy. If ye don't it'll likely come agen an' agen. Tell Dad an' we'll skeer it off. Bes' way to git rid of fear is to tell it out."

"It was a silly thing, if it was terrible" (if it had been light Doc would have seen that he blushed). "I dreamed I was far away in a foreign country. Every

one there was strange, but the Sad Lady and Elsie. I reached out for Elsie's hand, and it seemed we were going through some kind of ceremony. I was gloating around over that company of strangers as foolishly happy as if we'd been here in the little church at the Corners, with all our friends around. Suddenly, I felt a pull on my other hand. I looked around and, there at my side, stood a man with the most fiendish, cruel face you ever saw. Then I glanced down and saw on my left wrist a steel band, and from it dragged a heavy chain which bound me to this fiend. The Sad Lady seemed to see it, too, and she was just lifting away above her little body a tremendously heavy sledge, which seemed quite a natural part of the furniture, with the aim to bring it down and smash the chain when you came in and woke me. I hope I can break it up. I don't want dreams of that fiendish face again."

"An' ye don't have no need to, boy. I'm sorry I come in. The Sad Lady would ha' smashed that chain, sure as you live; smashed it into little bits she would. They ain't nothin' 'at smashes evil like love. An' that dream's a good dream, arter all. It tells jes' how things'll be. They's mebbe some chains 'at'll try to bind ye, but yore old daddy an' Aunt Mercy an' all the heaps o' frien's ye got'll smash every last one on 'em, ye understan' me."

David went back to sleep with a glow of comfort, and next morning got up and dressed for the first time. A few sunshiny days helped him shake off the thralldom of the house, and he quickened in health amazingly. School was only a few days past its first session when he put in his appearance and received a great ovation.

The impression had gone abroad that David's sickness was the direct result of his attention to Curry, and no statement to the contrary bore the least effect.

David was a hero. He had been a popular idol for a long time, and to transform him into a hero was easy work, for youth delights in the worship of heroes.

David did not dislike this adulation—being human—but he felt that it was undeserved, and sought to institute a change.

"Johnny, I wish you'd tell a few of these little suckling Freshmen, who take off their hats when I come near, that I wasn't hurt a bit by nursing Curry, but got my sickness right at home in the regular line of business. Tell 'em there's nothing to it," he asked.

"No use, Dave, old boy. It's Kismet. When a lot of sane fellows will deliberately take a sorrel-topped, freckle-spotted, hairy man of the woods and set him on a pedestal, it stands to reason they are not actuated by intelligent judgment, but swept away by the controlling influences of fate. No use little brother Johnny saying anything."

David thrust a shaky fist at him.

"That's right, old ingrate, spoiled by the adulation of the mob. Let a friend speak but plain words of truth, the jaded appetite revolts. Come on. Shoot if you will, you old red-head, but spare this bunch of brag, she said. It makes no difference. You're on a pedestal to stay, Dave. Doubt if you'll ever be able to walk again."

David stretched himself with a great sigh.

"If you and these people knew what I really am," he hinted, darkly.

"Know all about it," cried Johnny. "Holmes told me with a boo in his voice and a tear in his eye. I laughed at him. 'It wouldn't make any difference to me if Dave was a lineal descendant of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves,' I told him. 'Nothing would make any difference that happened before the good years that I've chummed with him, not even if they were things he'd done himself, and I can imagine dark crimes that

he might have waded through before that period of maturity began. Besides, I don't believe it's so, anyway,' I told him. 'And if I were you I wouldn't sweat about that ill-gotten coin until it walked out to meet me.'"

"Good old Johnny!" David's hand was strong enough in its grip on his shoulder. "Just like you, old boy. I wish every one in the world had as good a heart."

"Don't you bother about hearts, Dave. That's little brother's specialty. You stick to heads. Going to win that Austrian Scholarship, you know, so you mustn't grind too close. Come out now and take a stroll with Doctor Johnny."

Johnny looked after him in the first few weeks with most solicitous care. But every day David increased in strength until he reached his old physical form. When the college year closed, David was in fine trim, the bearer of many honours, the winner of the Austrian Scholarship. Johnny was among those who "also" graduated.

There was little elation in David's heart over his honours. The Austrian Scholarship was available to commence at any time, and David's impulse was to get at it as quickly as possible. He wanted to be busy. He desired to occupy himself with new scenes and new work. He may also have cherished a fancy that among the new scenes he might find old, familiar faces, but if so, he kept his secret.

The latest word from Elsie to her father was that old Mr. Wilton, being greatly improved, they expected to see a few places of interest, and make a long visit in London, where Mr. Wilton, who was of English birth, had a brother who had prospered greatly, and was one of the late "birthday knights."

There had been no correspondence between Elsie and David. He had steeled himself against it as an

indulgence which could lead only to sorrow, and she had waited for him to take the lead.

Things were very dull around Latham Corners. The Inn had a few guests, but a very few. The old doctor was employed chiefly by his country people. David, much as he disliked to leave him, was keen to get away.

When the time came to go it was found that the Austrian Scholarship fund would mean scant living for a healthy student. The old doctor insisted on adding to it.

"I suppose if the worst comes to the worst I have almost a hundred thousand dollars of my own money, somewhere," commented David, bitterly.

"Ye ain't hankerin' arter it, are ye, boy?" asked the doctor. "Ye don't want to do nothin' about it?"

"Nothing will ever be done by me," declared David. "I'll never make the least approach to it. But if the other parties, those lawyers, are going to do any investigating, I wish they'd get through with it, and let me out of my suspense. Not that I want the money. I'd be only too happy to know it wasn't mine. I don't say that I'd refuse to take it, since it isn't crime money, but I certainly don't want it and assuredly won't go after it."

The lawyers were investigating, as David might have known, but they were proceeding very slowly and with great caution. They had no intention of raising any unwarranted hopes this time.

"Yore Dad has plenty of money for ye, Davy, boy," the old doctor assured him. "We hates for ye to go, but if ye must, they ain't no lack o' money, ye understan' me."

The old man was deeply affected at the prospect of losing his boy even for a year.

"Ye go among strangers, Davy, boy, but Dad c'n trust ye," he said. "Ef they ask ye whose son ye

are tell 'em yore father is Doc Williams of Latham Corners, an' has papers to show it. They was wunst another they asked, 'Where is thy Father?' an' He had to tell some on 'em, 'Ye are of your father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning,' an' they had mighty little to say. Earthly fathers may be good an' may not, Davy, but when ye c'n git yore ancestry back to Him, boy, ye don't need worry much 'bout no earthly father. Ye goes to a furrin land, son, to be among strangers an' furriners, an' the old man an' woman what cain't go stays in the quiet, little place with their hearts sore 'cause their boy's so fur away. But, son, we lets ye go with more peace knowin' ye c'n look up an' say 'My Father,' than if we knowed ye to be the legal son an' heir of the best-mannered, moral, eddicated, honest gentleman as ever walked this earth, ye understan' me."

With David gone, the quiet village seemed yet more dull. Things went quietly along in a peaceful, narrow way, but life seemed to possess little interest.

One day Doctor Goodman came in with a trace of excitement showing in his face.

"Doctor," said he, "I believe I must go to England. I haven't anything very rushing just now. I wonder if I can trouble you to look after my work?"

"It's jes' as you say," assented the old doctor.

"I must tell you I have a letter from Mrs. Wilton. They are in London, now. Mrs. Wilton writes that she is rather worried about Elsie. She isn't sick, yet isn't really well. Some days she is all fire and fun, others she is in tears. She is bothered about young Thornton, too. He has followed them about quite faithfully, and lately is pressing Elsie for an engagement. The Sad Lady hardly knows what to say. She rather intimates that I ought to come, and there are many reasons why I feel impelled to do so."

It is needless to say that some of these reasons were too personal to communicate to Doc.

"That young Thornton there?" enquired the old doctor. "Hope you'll turn him right off. Don't seem to me he acted square 'bout Davy."

"I hardly see how you can say that, Doctor. He did nothing very unfair, as I look at it. And he is a young man of excellent family and habits. Of course, I'm not saying that I shall encourage him," he added, hastily.

"No, nor ye ain't sayin' 'at ye'll diskerridge him an' his excellent fambly an' habits, nuther," remarked Doc. "Howsomever I ain't desirin' to dictate none o' your affairs. But I wants ye to 'member 'at yore little gel give her promise to David. Dave, he may be fool enough to give up if they prove him kin to that murderer, but he cert'ny won't no other way. An' it ain't proved yet, ye understan' me."

"No, you are right. But it looks all too true. And such a heritage! What man would willingly let his daughter take it up?"

The old doctor let him go on without further comment, but his mind was full of brooding thoughts.

"Heredity!" he commented to Aunt Mercy, a few evenings later. "What is they in this thing Doc calls heredity, arter all? How fur back does heredity go? Is it jes' yore daddy 'at ye gits things from? If so, it cert'ny looks like Davy was hit putty hard if they c'n prove up the kinship, ye understan' me. But how 'bout goin' back a little furder. Ye knows all 'bout yore daddy; but how 'bout his'n? An' back o' that yet, his'n, an' still back o' that to his'n. How fur back'd most of us have to git to fin' somethin' terrible dark. Not such a awful ways, ye understan' me. Arter all, we was all borned in sin. Who's to say one kind's blacker'n t'other?

"Heredity!" he continued, scornfully. "I laughs

at it. 'Tain't nothin' compared to habit an' eddication. Yere's a little babe borned; how many a one I've seed, naked, squirming, nothin' on earth to tell how come it to be livin' 'cept'n the little chain of vessels 'at it's drawed its life-blood through so fur. But somewhere round this little kid is a thing they call heredity, ye understan' me.

"Mebbe heredity gives the little 'un a nice disposition like his ma. But this same nice disposition is too easy to train him. Consekence is he gits his own way an' soon is a sp'iled child, spite o' heredity, ye understan' me. 'Nuther youngster has heredity hand him a nasty disposition, but they goes with it a mother 'at won't stan' fur no nonsense, an' he gits brought up right. Heredity was mighty partial, but what's the diff'runce in the end? Which'n is the better baby?

"Take nuther kid, I thinks of. Heredity gave him a sweet mouth as she ever handed out. Habit lets him suck his fist. Ma's easy an' he keeps it goin' weeks an' months' an' years, ye understan' me. He ain't growed so awful old afore his mouth's all askew, an' his little teeth p'ints wrong, an' his palate's arched back. Which wins, heredity or habit?

"When a body's full growed, like our Davy, heredity's done its best an' its wust fur him. Whatever it had fur Davy was all to the good. An' when I thinks of anybuddy tryin' to cheat him out'n what's rightly his'n jes' for the name o' things or the looks o' things, I cert'ny am mighty near pervoked. 'Bout then it's time for old Doc to mix in matters the least trifle, hisself, heredity or no heredity, ye understan' me."

It was almost a week later that Johnny Langston met him in the village with a stranger, whom he introduced as Doctor Rose.

"He's the man I thought prob'ly Doc Goodman'd like bes' to look arter his folks while he's gone," he explained.

"I thought Doctor had left his practice with the best man in the country," protested Johnny.

"Jes' like yore paw, Johnny," laughed the old man. "Ef ye mean old Doc, he's goin' away a spell."

"Going away!" exclaimed Johnny. "Never heard of such a thing. This hamlet couldn't survive it. You're joking!"

"Not a joke about it, Johnny. The old man's feared his boy ain't like to be handed a square deal, so he's goin' way over to England to see 'bout it."

Doctor Rose had moved on to the Inn, which allowed the doctor to express himself freely.

Johnny emitted one of his expressive whistles. "Good for you, doctor. I knew things weren't just right from what Elsie was writing to Nora, but I didn't see how to help it. When do you go?"

"Leave here this arternoon. Callate to sturt f'm New York day arter to-morrer."

"Good enough! Say, Doctor, you're going to have company, did you know it?"

"It's news to me, Johnny. I was a-figgerin' on a trip all by myse'f. Who d'ye know as is going thater-way?"

"Little Johnny Langston, Doctor! Ain't it fine? Things are awfully dull around here, and Johnny just can't settle down to be a legal luminary until he's had a European trip. Johnny has a friend who needs him, too, so he wants in. Yes, sir," he continued, excitedly, "leaves here this afternoon and calculates to start from New York day after to-morrow."

The doctor laughed as he turned into the Inn, but he was not greatly surprised that afternoon when he saw on the station platform, lying next to the new trunk he had bought for the trip, a nobby-looking steamer-trunk stencilled John C. Langston; for Johnny generally had his own way.

Just one or two days later came the representative

of the law firm on his trip of investigation, having finished the voluminous researches which dealt with the child's early life and the history of Gentleman George down to his death in the penitentiary.

Mr. Holmes was in the West on a vacation, he learned. Very well, the boy known as David Williams?

In Europe! was the answer.

Indeed! Then the old man known as Doctor Williams?

In Europe, or at least on his way; again the proud reply.

A Doctor Goodman, who knew something of the matter, and his daughter, Elsie?

Both in Europe! Triumphant the response.

Well, well, indeed remarkable! But there is a young man somewhat, if slightly, concerned, named John Langston. "Is he also in Europe?" with gentle sarcasm.

"Gettin' thar as fast as the boat'll carry him," comes a chorus of voices in the crowning victory.

"Well, well, if this whole population has migrated to Europe, I suppose the only thing for me is to go there myself," thoughtfully remarked the representative legal light as he walked to the station, unmindful of the proudly rejoicing and laughing group whom he had questioned.

XXXV

IN ENGLAND

ENGLAND is charming in September. Even London is pleasant, and its suburbs are at their best. St. James Street station on the Great Eastern Railway looks very quiet and peaceful this bright September morning, at this early hour. Perhaps it should be said that St. James Street is in Walthamstow, a London suburb which but a few years ago was a little country village to itself. The railway track runs on a high embankment and crosses St. James Street on a short viaduct, for Britishers do not allow railroad trains to run helter-skelter across their streets, holding up traffic and scaring the wits out of old ladies and some young ones, as we do in America. The station is on a level with the track, of course, and has an outside stairway a great deal like the Elevated in Chicago.

Coming leisurely down this stairway is a benevolent-appearing old gentleman, with long grey hair and beard, a long black coat, and broad-brimmed hat, looking around in a manner at the same time hesitating and expectant.

Yes, you have guessed again, O Reader most astute; it is Doc Williams of Latham Corners!

The same principle which he enunciated to David in Chicago has sustained him in his present travels.

"It's all His. These hustlin', bustlin' folks is His people. If I don't know what to do, some on 'em'll tell me if I waits long enough."

Doc reached the foot of the steps and gazed about him. St. James is not a very busy street. A station-

er's shop by the station; the other side of the bridge a greengrocer's, a fishmonger's, a draper's, two or three dwellings, then a little farther on a barber shop, where you can get a hair-cut of a sort for tuppence, and the regular price for a shave is a penny, the boy to do the latherin'. No doubt it is a busy, bustling street now; but this was years ago, on a quiet September morning when everything was dull and peaceful.

A queer-looking figure sauntered up to the doctor; a short clay pipe adorned his mouth, a billycock his head, a suit of clean corduroy graced his rather stooped and somewhat stumpy and thickened figure. The doctor noticed encircling his wrist a wide leather strap, while knotted around his trousers just below each knee was a string of heavy cord. His hobnailed boots rang with a heavy clump on the flagged pavement. His little twinkling eyes flashed at the doctor a look of greeting.

"Wot cher, mate? How yer comin' up? Knowed you was the Hamerican soon as I set me peepers acrost you, blowed if I didn't."

Doc took the proffered hand cordially.

"Mr. Bennet sent ye word 'bout me," he suggested. "An' ye knew me fust off, did ye?"

"Soon as I seen yer. 'Gorblimey,' says I, 'hit's the Hamerican!' When I sees a cove got up in such a houtlandish rig, I knows he ain't no bloomin' Englishman, s'elp me Bob if I don't." And the navvy stooped to flick a wisp of straw from his bell-bottomed corduroys in all the conscious pride of correct attire.

The old doctor showed no resentment of the aspersion upon his raiment.

"I'm cert'ny glad to be here. An' I've got along fine, thanks be to Him. But I'll be glad to get to a quiet room at the hotel," he suggested.

"Hold on there, mate. We don't keep no 'otel, nor

yet a public 'ouse. Wot we keeps is a corfee 'ouse, with lodgin's for single gents."

"Call it what ye will," Doc agreed. "Where do we go?"

"Foller St. James Street 'ere to Marsh Street, down Marsh Street to where it runs into Coppermill Lane, and there y'are at Black'orse Lane Corfee 'Ouse. Where's yer borxes?"

The doctor and Johnny, on board the *Westernland,* had been so fortunate as to find one of the ship's stewards who knew all about the residence of Sir Wilston Wilton.

"It's out Chingford way," he told them. "I'm from Walthamstow myself, and I've passed Wilton Place many's the time when I've been on the road to Chingford, for a little outing in the Forest on a Bank Holiday. You let my people at Walthamstow put you up while you look around."

Doc had accepted it as another of the workings of Providence, and was here accordingly. Waiting for him was a message from Johnny at Vienna:

"David insists on absolute secrecy."

The old man read it with a placid face, and enquired of the accommodating navvy the direction to Wilton Place.

"A little bit of a jog, five or six mile. Goin' to run a tram car out that way some day, but now you hoofs it or you go on the Great Eastern. That's thruppence, third class, so wot I says is hoof it. Wot's five mile? Nothin' at all, s'elp me Bob!"

Down Blackhorse Lane they walked, a quiet suburban street lined with decent "villas" all apparently cast from the same mould. The interesting navvy pointed out its important features; here the Wesleyan Chapel, there the Board School, there 'Awkesly Terrace where the bloke he used to work for lived. The "villas" gave way to open common, and then the

navvy climbed over a stile where a path across the fields would give them a short cut.

The doctor's heart warmed within him, and he trod the springy sod with elastic step, for he was coming again into his own surroundings, far from home though he might be. It seemed that paths by hedges and through fields was a common and convenient English mode of travel, for they walked several miles in this way, only taking the country road for brief intervals.

Then suddenly the guide announced: "Here we be! This 'ere wall begins Wilton Place!"

A high stone wall, topped with broken pieces of glass set in cement, stretched along the country road far as the eye could see. From a corner a threatening sign announced: "Man Traps and Spring Guns," and a little farther on a second declared that "Trespassers will be prosecuted with the Utmost Rigour of the Law."

"Seems right anxious 'at folks shouldn't come in less'n they gits a special invite," commented Doc.

"It's 'is rights," asserted the navvy, prompt to resent any criticism of English customs. "A Englishman's 'ouse is 'is carstle, blyme if 'tain't."

"Shorely, shorely," assented the old doctor. "If he wants to use it for a castle, it's shorely his right. Where I come from we thinks more of usin' 'em for homes. Ain't s'much temptation for a body to bombard 'em, ye understan' me."

"Which no Englishman never feared no bombardment," insisted the navvy, his British pugnacity aroused.

"Not in the least," soothingly admitted the doctor. "But not doin' no bombardin', how about this gate seemin'ly bein' open?"

It was a tall, narrow gate, quite in keeping with the wall, solid and massive, and, when closed, as effective a barrier as its stone pillars. But some injudicious

user had not exerted the force necessary to spring the heavy lock, and it remained open just the crack that showed that it would yield to a good push.

But it would get no push from the law-abiding navvy.

"Not for the likes of us, it ain't open," he objected. "Wot we does, we follers the bloomin' road to the front and tells the loydy at the lodge wot we wants. Strike me blind, Guv'nor, don't yer see the bloomin' sign, 'Beware of the dog!'"

"I never yet seen the dawg 'at was feared o' me, nor me of him," answered the doctor, smiling. "'Sides, they's a thrush singin' jest inside there 'at I wants to look closter at."

"O' coorse you'll do wot you jolly-well please, just like a blarsted Yankee," called the navvy, indignantly. "But I washes my 'ands of you, I does, a-trespassin' on a gentleman's privut grounds, and if you wants my opinion——"

But, after all, the navvy and his opinions are none of our business. He comes in merely as the explanation of how the doctor, unaided, found his way through the suburban lanes of Walthamstow to Wilton Place at Chingford. The massive oak gate shut out his remarks as it swung gently to behind the old doctor's cautious entrance.

Safely past the gate and inside the forbidding, now protecting, walls of stone, the doctor stared around in pleased amazement. Scarce removed from the sound of the great city's bustle, so near that the dark of night never lost, in that direction, a certain radiance which indicated that beneath its glow lay the effulgence of the lighted city, this beautiful spot yet bloomed in its seclusion so richly redundant of nature's glories. Even Art had been called in only to add in a most artfully natural way to Nature's unobtrusive demonstrations.

The sociable thrush whose note he had heard hopped along in the grass but a few feet away. Birds! The place was a perfect aviary. Shrubs and trees which the doctor did not even recognize grew all around, and every tree had its soloist or chorus. Such a torrent of melody came from one bush that the old man tiptoed gently toward it, hoping to get a glimpse of the prima donna, wondering if, after all, it might be his little friend, the wren, who at home had so often demonstrated the fact that quantity and quality of music may easily be in inverse ratio to size of songster. A little whir of wings as he reached the bush only served to lead him to another, and scarcely had he reached this before the flood of harmony rose from a new place yet a little distance away. The doctor was entirely unmindful now of the English gentleman's grounds and private park. "No trespass" signs had no place in his consciousness. He was entirely happy, in his own environment for the first time since leaving Latham Corners.

Of a sudden the voice of the wren ceased abruptly. His ear bent for the interruption, the doctor's attention was caught by a sound most strangely out of harmony with the surroundings. It was a gentle sobbing, the low note that comes not from a passion of grief, but is given out by the heart that has restrained itself through trying scenes to give quiet vent to its sorrow when free from observation. It was as characteristic for Doc to seek this source of grief as to follow after the merry little wren.

The sound was easily followed, but to reach it was a mystery. It seemed to come from a space walled on every side with greenery, a natural arbour formed by the heavy drooping branches of a willow, aided in places of deficiency by artfully implanted shrubs. But a wisp of golden hair caught on a twig revealed the

entrance, and the doctor noiselessly pushed his way through.

A rustic bench and table furnished the arbour, and just now supplied a resting-place for a girl sitting on the bench with her arms on the table forming a cushion for her face, which lay on them, hidden from view by a loose tangle of hair. The noise had ceased. It had been but for a moment, as if a sudden access of grievous memories had induced a spasm of emotion; but, though no longer audible, her sobs still agitated her frame. So occupied was she and so absolute her feeling of security from intrusion, that the doctor stood at her side and laid a gentle hand on her rebellious hair before she raised her tear-stained face.

It was Elsie Goodman!

Her surprise was overwhelming. She was absolutely incapable of speech.

The doctor looked down at her in loving sympathy.

"Jes' 'bout skeered the little gel to death, comin' up so still an' quiet. Doc orter knowed better, daughter, but he's glad he done it, ye understan' me."

"Doctor! Doctor!" she cried, and reaching toward him, she threw her arms about his neck.

"There, daughter, Doc's awful glad he come the way he did. Now he's been able to see 'at somethin's most awful wrong an' they ain't no good tryin' to hide it up. Never min' 'bout how we got yere. Tell ye all 'bout it arter a bit. Jes' now Doc wants his little gel to tell him jest what's makin' her mis'able, ye understan' me. Jes' what is it 'at's gone wrong in this yere beautiful Paradise?"

"Everything, Doctor! Everything's wrong, and everybody. I'm so glad to have some one I can tell about it, without hurting their feelings. I can't tell the Sad Lady without seeming to reproach her. I can't tell papa, because he's in it himself. I can't tell any one, and I just feel all alone."

"Ye can tell every word to Doc," said the old man, soothingly.

"It's just that nobody seems to want me," sobbed Elsie. "I don't seem necessary to any one. First it was David, after all he had said, too. Didn't care to have me come back to say good-bye to him, and didn't want to hold me by any fancied tie which he might once have thought that he possessed, indeed!"

The tear-bedewed eyes flashed with indignation and the shapely head gave a savage little jerk as the tangled locks were tossed back into submission.

"Yes, daughter," agreed the old man, "Davy's an awful fool. An' yo're proud an' he's proud, an' the devil, he don't like nothin' better. But they's more yet. Tell me the rest."

"Well, all I heard about David was what papa and Nora wrote, and Mr. Thornton has been with us almost the whole time we've been away."

"Like him better'n Davy, do ye, daughter?"

"I didn't say so, but Dave doesn't want to be liked. Then papa came and I thought it was for me. He said it was, and she said it was. And he hadn't been here two days before I found out it was the Sad Lady he came for, and not me at all."

The old doctor chuckled.

"Thought ye guessed that c'ndition of affairs long ago," he remarked.

"Oh, I knew it years ago, after a fashion. But I always supposed Mrs. Wilton wouldn't listen to such a thing, until we were together so much on this trip. Then the way she always treasured his letters and looked for them so, and was always so eager to see any little thing he had written in the medical journals, and gloated just about as much as I did about what those German doctors said about his work, I began to be suspicious. And now I've just learned through a friend that she doesn't want me, and he doesn't want

me, but they just want each other, and if I wasn't in the way they would just get married and go off together happily," and again the tears fell freely.

"Who was the kind friend 'at ye learned all this f'm?" asked the doctor, drily.

"It was Mr. Thornton," she replied, hesitating.

"Guessed as much," said the doctor. "An' I s'pose if ye marry him right off, ye won't be in nobuddy's way no longer, eh?"

Elsie blushed deeply, but made no other reply.

"Thought 'twas 'bout time for old Doc to come," continued the doctor. "Now ye wants me to tell how come I'm here. Last ye seen of Dave he was still on his sick-bed, an' there he laid yet when a big trouble come to him."

"Trouble! To David? Why didn't I hear of it?" exclaimed Elsie, all animation.

"Jes' what I said, Elsie. 'Twarn't no fault of old Doc 'at ye didn't git word at wunst. But Dave, he's notional an' he's boun' to have it 'at Elsie shouldn't know. 'Mebbe 'tain't true,' he says. An' for that matter, mebbe 'tain't. We don't know no more 'bout it now an' we did then. Anyway, that mebbe explains things 'at seemed queer to ye 'bout way he acted. Well, I cain't tell ye jes' what the trouble is yet. On'y this mornin' I gets a message from Johnny to say Dave insists 'at nothin' be said. But I'm jumpin' away ahead o' my tale."

"But never mind now, Doctor. Tell me what is this trouble. I ought to be able to help him."

"Course ye could, daughter. But jest like I said a minute ago, he won't 'low nobuddy to tell ye. That's why old Doc made all this trip. Things gittin' wuss an' wuss an' no tellin' what's goin' to happen, I jes' makes up my mind to come an' straighten 'em out an' Johnny, he come with me. We was on a German vessel 'at goes first to Antwerp, so Johnny leaves me there

an' goes overland to Vienny. He knowed I was putty safe. Ye see they was a feller on ship, one o' the stewards he was, as knew all 'bout this place, havin' lived out this way, an' he told me jes' how to come an' where to get lodgin's an' all. So here I am, Dave's at Vienny, Johnny's at Vienny, an' if I knowed jes' how to send one o' them messages like Johnny sent me, I'd bring Dave an' Johnny over here on the jump, ye understan' me."

"Oh, do, Doctor; do it right away! I'm so homesick, I'd give a thousand dollars or even a thousand of these funny English pounds, which is five times as much, you know, for a chance to see Johnny Langston again."

"An' they ain't nobuddy else ye'd like to see?" queried the old man, wistfully.

"Well, I won't say, Doctor. You know I ought to be real mad at David for hiding his trouble from me. You know it wasn't fair, Doctor. What kind of a girl does he think me that he can't let me help when there's trouble?"

"He done it for what he thought was the best, Elsie, but I told him he was mistook. But now, about this yere message? S'posin' I say about like this, now: 'Dear Johnny: Yours of yestiddy at hand and contents noted. We are all well an' hope this finds ye——'"

"No, Doctor. That would cost too much, altogether. Let me write the message, and then all you will need to do is to take it to the man at the railway station, and pay the charges."

"That'll be fine, daughter. On'y if Dave sees yore handwrite, won't he s'picion somethin'?"

"The man will write it over so he won't see it, Doctor; and I'll just sign your name to it."

"All right, dear. An' now don't ye go listenin' to

no one 'at says anythin' agen my boy till he comes an' speaks for hisself. Will ye, now?"

Elsie gave the required promise, and saw the old doctor down to the little side gate at which he had entered.

"Don't tell nobuddy 'at ye seen me, Elsie. I'll jes' go back to the place I'm stayin' till Davy comes. There's my little wren, right now. How the birds do sing in this yere place!"

Yes, Elsie could hear the singing of the birds now. How sweet was their melody, how tuneful every note! For the old doctor and his queer companion were plodding back to town, where the doctor was to send a message to John C. Langston, care American Consul, Vienna, which read very briefly: "Bring David at once!"

Oh, to think of it! After all, David had really had a reason. Yes, the birds filled the heavens with their melody!

XXXVI

THE SAD LADY FAINTS

IT was true that the Sad Lady held Doctor Goodman very much in her thoughts. She had supposed that sentimental love was a closed chapter in her life. She had turned it over forever with the pages which recorded the brief life of the little one who had been given but to be snatched away. It was not even to be reviewed again.

But years of persistent kindness and devoted attention by an honourable man are not to be lightly dealt with by any true woman. And when there is no real obstacle to her taking the sparks of love into her bosom and letting them kindle a new affection on the cold embers, she may almost unconsciously respond until some day she discovers heat which speaks of real fire beneath.

So it was with the Sad Lady's response to Doctor Goodman's wooing. It was more than two years now since she had known positively that all legal impediment to the consideration of his claims was removed; and these late months of absence in Europe, with Elsie as constant companion, had served as the gentle breeze which fanned the flame into a bright glow.

So when Doctor Goodman found it necessary to come to England to look after Elsie, there was more than one heart to give him genuine welcome.

Mrs. Wilton had really been disturbed about Elsie. Her alternating spells of moodiness and gaiety, of lassitude and buoyancy, her unusual petulance, her occasional tears were matters of great concern. She shrewdly guessed that the underlying disturbance was

an affection of the heart as sentimentally considered, rather than any irregularity of physical functions. But she could only guess, for Elsie, in her youthful pride, did not choose to make a confidante even of so dear a friend. She was also genuinely puzzled and somewhat distressed about Mr. Thornton and his attentions to her young charge. For her part, she was, as always, an active and enthusiastic promoter of David's interests. But Elsie insisted that David had neither interests nor interest, that he had given up; and this seemed to be confirmed by the absence of the letters which might naturally have been expected.

As to Mr. Thornton, he seemed quite beyond objection. His family was good, his fortune ample, his success in his profession already marked. He was of pleasing address and, being an experienced traveller, had been of very great assistance to them in their journeyings. Tactful and diplomatic, he apparently knew well when to push his suit, and when remain passive, and certainly seemed to progress. Add to this the fact that he possessed Doctor Goodman's approval, and it was very evident that, no matter what preference she felt for David, it was scarcely proper for Mrs. Wilton to institute any active opposition to Mr. Thornton. All of which is explanatory of her letter to Doctor Goodman.

Doctor Goodman found the Sad Lady more charming than ever, though he had scarce considered such progress a possibility. Nearly leaving her thirties, her appearance would rather encourage the thought that she might possibly be at their entrance. He had never seen her rule a household, but, since Sir Wilston Wilton was a childless widower, she was for the time being in charge of an establishment of great distinction, and presiding with a charming grace. Her father's improved health, and her companionship with Elsie had given her an increased vivacity, and this was

heightened by the fact that she was really very happy to see the man. Is it any wonder that the doctor's fire of affection flamed furiously, and that Elsie had genuine grounds for feeling slighted?

The summer days which followed the doctor's arrival at Wilton Place were filled with such charm as had never fallen to his lot. He got no verbal encouragement from the object of his affections, but true love needs little gross verbiage. There are countless methods of communication if desired, and there is also the secret code of telepathic impulse which works so readily twixt souls in harmony, and will not be denied, no matter what coy protests modesty advances.

The doctor did not give himself wholly to indulgence. Most mornings he walked over to Chingford station and took the Great Eastern Railway train to the city, where he spent the morning at one of the hospitals, generally at St. George's, where he had friends on the staff. But he was always back in the afternoon by tea-time, and there were long pleasant evenings to follow.

Shortly after Doc Williams' visit to Elsie, Doctor Goodman met the Sad Lady as he turned in at the side gate. The Sad Lady was very bright and fair. The afternoon sun beamed in harmony.

The doctor was smiling.

"I'm a victim of optical illusions," he explained, laughingly. "The other day as I turned the road I saw in the distance a figure my eyes declared to be old Doctor Williams. To-day I was waiting at Liverpool Street Station, in the big crowd that always stands at the platform just before the gate is opened, when suddenly I saw Johnny Langston. He was gone in a flash, and I was obliged to conclude it was another trick."

"You are getting homesick," suggested the Sad Lady. "It is a sign that your people need you."

"But I'm not ready to go yet, dear Lady," said the doctor. "I have one piece of business which absolutely must be settled before Latham Corners sees me again."

The Sad Lady blushed intelligently.

They were passing the willow arbour, and taking her hand, he led her inside to a seat.

"Do you know, I do not want to go back until I have made the European tour I have been promising myself for so many years. And I do not want to make it alone. Your father is well now and quite happy here with his brother. Can't I persuade you to bear me company?"

"Why not Elsie?" asked the Lady, with mischief.

"Elsie, by all means. But Elsie won't stay with me forever. I want my companion on the trip, which is perhaps the only one I shall ever make, to be one who will always stay with me and let us constantly renew the old scenes together."

"I would suggest Stoddard's Lectures." The Sad Lady was contrary.

"You do not understand what I mean, do you, dear Lady?" The gentleman was bold.

"I mean, to be very explicit indeed, that I want you to marry me! Now! Here, in London! And go with me on a European trip, and then, of course, go back with me to Latham Corners to spend the rest of our lives together. I hope I am clear. I hope you will say 'yes' as definitely as I have stated the proposition."

The Sad Lady's face clouded.

"Almost persuaded, dear friend, and then the old obstacle always arises. It isn't the future, it isn't the present, it is the past. You know a little about it. I don't mind so much about the man. The harm that he can do is past. Such sting as he can inflict is over. But when I contemplate happiness again—the happi-

ness of wedded life, of being a wife, perhaps more—then comes, at once, a memory which spoils the picture, takes away my desire for it, brings up the old sad days, and makes me want to cling to them. You know what it is. It is the face of the little one—the one who was mine for a year—who was snatched away from me—who was lost!" Again the Lady was in tears.

"And is it not possible, dear Lady, that this painful, tantalizing memory could be supplanted by a joyous reality that would wholly obliterate it?" asked the man of science.

The Sad Lady blushed. She was about to answer when she heard the voices of approaching people.

"It is Elsie and Mr. T.," she whispered. "They are coming here. It will be embarrassing."

"Not at all," replied the doctor, in the same low voice. "We have a right to sit in this arbour. It was made for such purposes. And perhaps they will not come in."

They would not if Elsie could avoid it; and for a special reason. She had been very happy since the old doctor's visit, both in recollection and anticipation. She had not at all desired Mr. Thornton's company today, but it seemed that urgent business called him back home and he was bound to see her. Her own plan had been to walk leisurely down to the arbour, and sit quietly on the same seat and live over again the past and the future. Since that day of revelation it seemed a sacred spot to her, and for the present she had no desire to enter sacred places with Mr. Thornton.

For his part, he cared for nothing more than an opportunity to talk, and it made no difference to him whether they went in or stood outside on the path. Just so they were sufficiently alone that he might say freely his message, he had no other concern.

Elsie had evidently given evasive replies.

"But I have waited all summer, Elsie. You know

you gain nothing by waiting. Matters won't change, unless it may be for the worse. I can assure you that what I told you about Mrs. Wilton and the doctor is true. You can see it for yourself; in fact, any one can. One would almost wonder that people as old could be so foolishly confiding. They would really be relieved, I am sure, if your decision were announced."

The doctor frowned; the Sad Lady blushed indignantly.

"That isn't the only thing, Mr. Thornton. I feel differently to-day. I don't mind just whispering to you that I have heard a secret. I know father and Mrs. Wilton don't want me very badly, as you say, and I know that you do. But I'm not quite ready to be sure that there isn't some one else who does, too, and I'm waiting."

She gave a happy little laugh.

The doctor frowned again; the Sad Lady smiled.

"I know what you mean, Elsie," replied Thornton. "But I am able to tell you positively that you need not wait. The conditions which have held him back for all these months will not change. His love is nothing compared to mine or he would not have given you up, but having done so it has to be forever, for things cannot change with him."

"You speak very positively." Elsie's tone carried a note of warning to the two who knew her so well.

"I am very positive. The barrier is a revelation of his early life which cannot be removed."

"Supposing I chose not to consider it a barrier?"

"You say that because you do not know. I am anxious for your answer. Why should we quibble about this? I have only to tell you what the mystery is to settle it forever, for, as I said, it is a barrier you can neither remove nor ignore. Your father knows the circumstances and is positive in his views. He would, and if necessary will, insist that you give no encour-

agement to a man with such a history. Listen! David Williams has been proven to be the son of a man whose death occurred in the penitentiary at Joliet a few years ago. The man was serving a sentence for murder! No wonder he stands back. His father was a murderer!"

The doctor groaned beneath his breath as he listened.

"Oh, the fool!" he muttered. "I didn't think he would do that." He clutched the hand of the Sad Lady, who had turned deathly white.

"Mr. Thornton, I thank you for this." Elsie's tones were defiant. "You have done many kind services for me, but this excels them by far, and I thank you so much. Every one knew it but I, of course. No other was brave enough to tell me!"

"I thought you ought to know," interposed Thornton. "I felt sure it would settle things."

"Oh, it does! It does!" Elsie's voice was so shrill it was almost a scream. "I am so glad to know it. My poor boy keeping back, staying away, afraid even to write because he would not drag me into a thing that he thought would be misery for me! Trying to hide it because he thought my promise would give me no chance to escape it. Ready to bear the greatest agony of his life all alone! Oh, I'm so glad to know!

"Don't I know him?" she cried, fiercely, as if any one would dare to dispute. "Don't I remember when it seemed that the disgrace of quackery would be forced upon him, how he prepared to give up everything and bear his trouble alone?

"And does any one think I would let him? No, sir. It is the happiest news I have heard in months. To know that, after all, there is a reason for his silence. It is not that he does not care for me, but that he does and wishes to spare me. Oh, Mr. Thornton, there are men who could not stand the stigma of being the son of a murderer, for a moment. But my David, who has

made his own way, who has proven himself, though he might be shown to be the son of one as black as Judas Iscariot, would shine through it all a noble man. And, Mr. Thornton, because it's you, and because you were kind enough to tell me when no one else would, I don't mind saying that if he were as worthless as the man supposed to have been his father, and came for me, I would go with him, for I love him and him alone!"

The doctor could hear her whirling through the brush as she raced wildly away to her room and the solace of tears. He turned, at last, for he noticed that the hand which he clutched was limp and cold. As he released it, there was a great sigh and collapse.

The Sad Lady had fainted.

XXXVII

WHO WAS HIS MOTHER?

WILTON HALL is very quiet. The great house of Sir Wilston Wilton is submerged in gloom. Doctor Goodman, his professional poise for once departed, stands at the massive front entrance gazing anxiously down the long driveway, listening eagerly for the sound of wheels on the gravel. He is impatiently awaiting the arrival of Sir Dartley Neuron, the great brain specialist, for whom he has telegraphed.

His patient lies upstairs in the quiet, dark room where she has been carried from the little arbour, and over and over again she repeats in a low, plaintive, yet accusing voice, one monotonous query: "Who was his mother, Doctor Goodman? Answer me. Who was his mother?"

The dark of night is gathering. The message was sent nearly two hours ago. The trip from the city to Chingford should be made easily in that time. What delays Sir Dartley Neuron? "Who was his mother?" How the message does intrude in all one's thoughts. "Who was his mother?" Why should the Sad Lady be so affected? She has lost her own child; that, of course, is the explanation. "Who was his mother?" This shock must be counteracted without delay or we shall be having tissue destruction and a permanent injury. "Who was his mother?" How slow these Englishmen are. Scarcely a matter of twenty miles and good train service. Who *was* his mother, anyway? Why didn't some of us try to ascertain? Give a thousand dollars if I could get Barnes of Johns Hopkins

here. "Who was his——" Wheels on the gravel drive at last. A noiseless footman springs to the door. Doctor Goodman rushes down the steps.

"Come in. Come right in," he says to the little man in black, whom he had never seen before. "We have been expecting you for some time."

"Yes?" remarks the little man, impassively.

"I will take you at once to Mrs. Wilton," Doctor Goodman suggests.

"That is the purpose of my visit," admits the little man. "But may I not first have the privilege of a room for a few minutes to remove the marks of travel?"

"I would prefer that there be no delay," urges Doctor Goodman, with such professional courtesy as he controls. To himself he is saying: "Oh, these Englishmen; stains of travel from a twenty-mile drive! Slowcoach!"

"As you say," the little man acquiesces, and is led into the room where the Sad Lady, quiet and pale, is asking monotonously: "Answer me, Doctor Goodman. Who was his mother?"

He looks with keen interest at the patient. Doctor Goodman, pleased with his searching, comprehensive scrutiny is yet puzzled by his lack of technical procedure. No testing of reflexes, no examination of pupillary reaction, not so much as a feel of the pulse. Is the man so great that he can discard all these aids to diagnosis, or is he simply a lucky fool, who has been carried to fame by fortunate circumstances without the backing of real merit?

"Barnes would never pass a patient up with such an apology for an examination," he mutters to himself, as he leads the way to a private room for the consultation.

"How long has she been in this condition?" asked the little man.

"Since four o'clock this afternoon," replies Doctor Goodman.

"It is due, no doubt, to sudden shock. What were the circumstances?"

So far as in him lies, Doctor Goodman gives a complete account.

"Do you not think, Doctor," asks the little man, as if it were he who deferred and Doctor Goodman who decided, "do you not think that a strong and positive counter suggestion would be most apt to bring relief?"

Yes, Doctor Goodman thinks it would, but how proceed?

"This young man about whom the agitation seemed to originate. Can he be reached?"

"My daughter told me, little more than an hour ago, that he has been sent for by an old friend, a Doctor Williams, who has unexpectedly arrived in the neighbourhood."

"It would be a strange coincidence if this proved to be one of the two young Americans who travelled on my train from Liverpool Street Station. But strange things happen sometimes. Was he tall and big with dark curly hair?"

"No, but that would fit his friend Langston."

"The other was a heavy-set, pleasant-looking young man with dark auburn hair and moustache."

"It fits him, excepting for the moustache, and that is an easy possibility."

"They left the train at St. James Street Station."

"Then they were the two. They evidently went to the coffee-house where the old doctor is staying; and if he had not already left before their arrival they will be here in a few minutes with Doctor Williams. I sent for him as soon as I heard that he was in the neighbourhood, because, while not ex-

actly conventional, the old doctor has keen common sense, and the lady has at one time been his patient."

"Williams of—er—Latham Corners?" queries the little man. "I have heard him well spoken of by some American patients."

Doctor Goodman stands amazed. The greatest specialist in London has heard of the fame of old Doc Williams of Latham Corners! But he makes no comment, for from below is audible once more the sound of an approaching carriage.

"Let us hope they are with him," says the doctor.

It is they! The boys arrived just as the old doctor was leaving. Doctor Goodman hurries the old man upstairs to meet the specialist.

"Ah, yes, Doctor Williams of Latham Corners," responds the little man to the introduction. "After you've had a look at the patient, Doctor, suppose we two talk it over. Our friend, Doctor Goodman, really appears to have too personal an interest."

Certainly the great little man is frank, if disagreeable. But Doctor Goodman makes no protest. His interest is indeed very personal.

They are closeted together quite a long while, the specialist and Doc Williams. Then they return to the room, smiling, Doc's great hand laid in a familiar way on the shoulder of the little Englishman.

"We're goin' to use Davy," Doc announces. "Have him come up."

David comes and is introduced. The little man looks him over sharply. "You look like a keen one," he says. "Do just what Doctor Williams instructs and I hope—I may, indeed say, I believe—our chances won't be half bad, considering."

"He shorely will," says Doc, proudly, transferring his hand to an affectionate grasp of David's shoulder. "They ain't nobody c'n do this better'n Davy.

"What ye mus' do is simple, boy. But ye mus'

do it firm an' decided like. The Sad Lady lies there an' she says: 'Who was his mother? Answer me, who was his mother?' Ye ain't goin' to argy with her ner nothin'. All 'at ye does is to set down there quiet like, take holt of her hand, an' say as lovin' as ye can: 'Mother!' or sometimes: 'I'm here, mother, David is here.'"

Did the old doctor know? Did he have an inspiration or only a shrewd guess? In the doorway the three doctors quietly watch the success of their experiment. Is it only fancy that shows so strong a likeness between the young man sitting there quiet, calm, and masterful, and the still figure on the bed? There is little likeness between his rugged, square-cut outline and the delicate contour of her features; but the blue of the eyes, the glint of auburn hair, the indefinable something that is known as family likeness—have they been blind never to see it before? Is it no more than a fancy worked by the romantic staging of the pathetic scene?

There are at least two who have no doubt; for Elsie, looking between their shoulders, sobs softly, "She *is* his mother," and the little specialist nods his head, as if in most emphatic confirmation.

"Who was his mother?" moans the figure on the bed.

"Mother!" cries the young man at her side, heedless of the watchers. "Mother!"

No need to tell him to put love into those tones, good doctor. He has loved the Sad Lady since she first showed her pity for the little waif.

A long interval ensues. "Answer me, who was his mother?" comes again the cry.

And once more he affirms: "Mother, I am here. Here is David!"

Yes, if a wealth of love expressed in tones vibrant and tense can call back one who wanders on the

borderland, to settled sanity and health, the Sad Lady is safe!

Again and again a longer interval, and then the silence grows so long the little specialist steps quietly to the bedside and inspects the placid face.

"She is asleep," he says. "She will do well. Good-night."

XXXVIII

THE RAVELLINGS

WITH what General Wilton was able to explain of his daughter's past, one thing was very sure—if David was the son of Gentleman George, he was also the son of the Sad Lady. Had she not chosen to be known by her father's name of Wilton, any of them might have guessed the situation long since, but the name had served as an effectual barrier to those who, knowing her sorrow, had yet known so little of its root.

Before the Sad Lady was able to take her place with them again, came one who definitely cleared their suspense. It was the legal representative who had called at Latham Corners. His firm had followed the matter out, step by step, with most painstaking care. They were now prepared to render a most emphatic and indisputable report. The child born to the Sad Lady was positively identified as the young man living at Latham Corners under the name of David Williams. As to the fortune, it was his upon taking the usual steps in the Court of Probate.

After all, the expected thunderclap did not occur. The gases of surprise had leaked away before the legal light had the opportunity to apply his spark of evidence.

The explanations to follow are not so very numerous. Three or four intimate pictures will dispose of them.

The first is taken on the evening that the Sad Lady is allowed to resume her place at the dinner table. Dinner at Wilton Hall is rather a function, as is common in English houses of the upper estate, and to-

night it is to be resumed in all its pomp. Johnny, mindful of the ceremonies, has looked after the get-up of the careless David, as well as his own adornment. The group in the hall is complete save for David and the Sad Lady, and as they await them Johnny is complacent in the confidence that, for once, David will look the part.

Ah! They stand in the wide entrance, smiling and confident, for the faces into which they look all bear the loving, eager welcome of that most intimate relationship, the kinship of choice; not the faintest questioning suspicion to mar the harmony. If there has ever been for these two a dark past, even the faintest shadow in their heritage or connection, the glow of their united righteous individuality has cast about it an ennobling halo which converts it from darkness into light.

One moment they stand, and what fools these mortals be, not to have guessed, so striking now the likeness. David, wearing with dignity the conventional dinner raiment on which Johnny had insisted, his features handsome in their rugged strength, his fair skin and auburn hair, which speaks so plainly of his mother, helping the harmonious contrast between the placid white of linen and stately black of evening clothes, is a son to be desired by any woman in the land.

The Sad Lady—let the heart of Doctor Goodman speak—the fairest, most divinest woman in the land, sanctified by affliction, glorified by conquest, beautified by Heaven's atmosphere within her soul! All nature's gifts are hers, all attributes divine are in her heart. Who would not serve, protect, and render adoration? Ah, who would not?

She is still the Sad Lady. But already a look of satisfied peace is beginning to supplant that hungry

love which used to look out from her eyes and caused the children's name.

In the silence, not of embarrassment, but of unqualified admiration, the little company proceeds to the table, and then Johnny—who already is as much at home here as Sir Wilston, and much more familiar—then Johnny disturbs its religious harmony and brings the relief which all tense situations at some point demand: "Sit right here, Mother," says Johnny, carelessly. "We'll ask the man to put little Davy's high-chair at your left, and you see that he doesn't smear the treacle on the tablecloth."

Rot! Of course; but from that on life flowed in its natural channels, and the Sad Lady—the Glad Lady—was again part of it.

The next picture comes the day after.

Sir Dartley Neuron has made his last call. He is walking to his carriage in amicable discussion with his colleagues.

"Tell you what, Goodman," he says, with an emphatic shake of his head, "if we are to improve the human race, a man with an absolutely normal daughter mustn't be afraid to let her take a bit of a chance on a mate of a lower strain, always providing it's nothing of a vicious or degenerate character, and the young man has shown himself to be of a progressive and improving type. Highest kind of altruism, you know."

"And in this case?" enquired Doctor Goodman.

"Your bogey's harmless, man. In the case of this boy's father there was no neurosis. He went wrong through bad environment; the boy was led right through good environment. Heredity leaves us certain tracks that will be easy going for us. Nerve paths, eh? Then the condemned idiots who train up a child in the way he should never even contemplate insist on pushing him into these paths day after day,

with the most provokingly persistent suggestion. Take a boy away early, as this young chap was. Give him counter suggestion persistently as was given to him—call it environment—call it habit—call it what you will, but let it be given in genuine honesty without thought or fear of failure. What do you get? My word, Goodman, look at the lad! He's the answer!"

The old doctor pats the great little man's shoulder approvingly.

"Hit it on the head that time, Neuron. That's one nail ye cert'ny druv home. An' the best environment's where the angel of the Lord encampeth round 'bout them that fear Him an' delivereth them."

He helps the little man into his carriage, with old-fashioned courtesy, leaving Doctor Goodman to go his way, and make the third picture for us.

It is the willow arbour again and the Glad Lady has, for reasons best known to herself, chosen to rest here. Enter Doctor Goodman.

"I am overjoyed to see you here, my dear Lady."

"Yes, Doctor, dear." The Lady is more than fully restored and is younger than ever. "You must have the kind of joy that runneth over, for it is scarcely an hour since we parted."

"I do not wish to modify my verb, Lady, for I am always overjoyed to see you. But it is especially so in this sanctified place."

"Is it so sacred a place?" asks the Lady. "My supposition would be that our last meeting here made trouble for you."

"You forget, dear Lady. It was in this place that you admitted that you were 'almost persuaded.' Only a little memory of the past rose up to defeat my plea, and, my dear, do you not see that even that is now cleared away. You are ready to be quite persuaded, are you not?"

Perhaps so. Perhaps so. But at least there is a little castigation due Doctor Goodman first.

"It is you who forget, Doctor. It was in this place that my precious boy was to be refused his heart's desire, because a father thought his past too dark a heritage. His past, Doctor Goodman, is my past."

"Oh, Lady, dear Lady. You do me injustice. Indeed, you do. It was David himself who insisted. I but acquiesced, and all the time I knew I was in error."

"It might have been a sad error for two young hearts if my dear girl had not dissolved it with a woman's love."

Doctor Goodman was always quick to seize an opportunity.

"But she did, you see, Lady. And she is expecting now that the past will bury its past, and all the future will be bright. She expects you to be her mother in a double sense. You will not disappoint her, Lady?"

The lady smiles a happy smile.

"And you would be content if I came for such a reason as that?"

"For any reason!" The doctor cares little about measures, his aim is results.

"Well, I will think of it, Doctor. Perhaps the dear girl needs to have one reasonable parent. If David cannot cross the opposition of a stern father, possibly it would be well to give him the assistance of a complaisant mother."

There is no need of any further inspection of this picture, especially since the figures in it consider themselves unobserved.

Picture four is in Epping Forest, where Elsie and David have walked later in the day. Epping is the People's Forest. It was so announced by Queen Victoria when she appeared at the grand opening a few years ago. And from its location that means it is the

Londoner's forest. But near as it is, it is yet too far for 'Arry and 'Arriet excepting on the occasion of a Bank Holiday, a Treat, or a Beanfeast, and when the poor, starved people can get to it, who shall begrudge their joy?

But the greater part of the time Epping is a real forest, with trees and underbrush and thickets and brambles and birds and rabbits and an occasional fox and the blue sky of heaven. If you cannot, for the sake of all this, overlook an occasional lunch remnant, Bass's ale bottle, or greasy newspaper, you are of different stuff to our young people, who revelled in the delicious woodsy solitude.

"Are you going to take the money, David?"

"Yes, indeed, sweetheart," says David, in a voice which makes us feel very sorry for Doctor Goodman, if he supposes any one is going to ask any further permission of him.

"You don't think it wrong, at all?"

"Not at all, love. It's mother's really, but she has plenty. And I know of good uses for that money."

"What, for instance?"

"Twenty-two is plenty old enough if you have the money," answers David, with apparent irrelevance.

"You are twenty-two, aren't you, David? But I'm the one who counts, and I sha'n't be twenty-two for a long, long time; months, anyway."

"I don't mind waiting a little while," agrees David, magnanimously. "Besides we're bound to get back where Aunt Mercy could attend, and I'd like Mr. Holmes and his wife, too."

"And you haven't mentioned my friends," exclaims Elsie, indignantly. "There's Nora and a dozen other girls—I believe I promised every girl in the class."

"I don't see how you could have written to them all so quickly," comments the happy David, thus show-

ing that he knows little of a young lady's anticipatory faculties.

You see, it is all settled, and David is supremely happy.

One sweet woman has lifted the burden of his dread heritage, and given him an ancestry in which to glory, in spite of the dark cross. Now, this other will show how little a true woman cares for the pomp and circumstance of name and lineage, if but the man bereft of these has in himself the sterling worth which in good time is bound to bring honour and good report, such as can never be maintained alone by lineage and rank.

The separation had been hard, the renunciation agonizing, but all, all is past, and as he peers into the happy future, he sees no reason why Elsie shall not always be the crowning figure of his dreams.

XXXIX

CERTAINLY THERE WAS A WEDDING

WEDDING! Certainly there was a wedding! The young folks might very properly wait for the added charm of Latham Corners' environment. They were not so old that a little waiting would be amiss. But there were others who had waited long enough already.

David was willing; Elsie gave her consent; and so their mother and father, respectively, united themselves to become also their stepmother and stepfather, with a prospect of more complicated relationships some time in the years to come.

It took place on British soil, at Wilton Hall, under the guidance of a British bishop, but the Stars and Stripes occupied a position well to the front in the decorations.

Both Doctor Goodman and the Glad Lady had long desired a Continental trip, and it seemed a pity to go back home first. So, together with Elsie, they made Vienna their first visiting point, and put David back to work (at least for a time).

Johnny stayed with David for a season. He wrote home that the only way to do a thing was to do it right, and as he desired to be very fit for work on his return, it seemed to him best not to make it too soon.

The old doctor's work abroad was accomplished. He waited only for the first swift vessel home. For his place at Latham Corners was still unfilled, and he could hear the voices of his people calling.

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